

CONTRIBUTIONS OF PSYCHOSYNTHESIS
TOWARD A GROWTH ORIENTED MODEL
FOR PASTORAL COUNSELING

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SECTION I
THEORETICAL ISSUES

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

It is my purpose in writing this dissertation to become well acquainted with the principles and techniques of Psychosynthesis, and to integrate what I find helpful into my own self-understanding as a Christian, and my practice as a pastoral counselor.

In doing the above I purpose secondarily to present my findings in a clear and understandable fashion to the academic-religious community, and to the community of workers who labor at the task of pastoral counseling. It is hoped that my effort will enlighten and make more effective both myself and others in the specific task of discovering creative possibilities inherent in the difficulties of life.

Methodology

Integration in the fields of psychology and theology is immensely complicated by the variety of both topics.

In an effort to simplify and clarify the integrative task I have chosen a phenomenological approach in dealing with the section on theoretical issues. I will seek to represent both Christianity and Psychosynthesis in terms of their "mythic structures of existence." This approach combines the method of John Cobb in *The Structure of Christian Existence* and the insights of Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy*

in a New Key; Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History*; and Erich Neumann, *The Origins and History of Consciousness*. The basic notion is that values are normally represented in all schools of human thought in terms of mythic symbolization. The existential stance of the human personality toward its myths may be discerned and compared with ways of being inherent in other myths, thus shedding light on the meaning of their various doctrines.

In the section on methodology I shall seek to deal with the fruits of these root concepts: those specific methods used for fostering the sort of existence implied by the original myth. In this section, methods of Psychosynthesis will be compared with methods having other mythical backgrounds, and in the process of comparison, the values implicit in the underlying myths will be considered.

While no particular metaphysical choices are inherent in the phenomenological approaches, the clear imprint on my Christian perspective in its perception, selection and organization of material, will be evident in this study.

Limitations

A general comparison between Psychosynthesis and Christianity will be attempted, based theologically on the mythic structure of Christian existence which I present. However no thoroughgoing theological study based on the systematic thought of any single thinker will be attempted. The variety of Christian theology precludes this.

The nature of the Self will be considered in a comparative

way, but a thoroughgoing study will not be attempted, because of the vastness of the topic.

The potential uses of psychosynthesis will be dealt with in a way only suggestive of new directions for experimentation and further study. It is recognized that this is an area worthy of a dissertation in and of itself.

Psychosynthesis and Human Consciousness

Psychosynthesis holds to a view of man which includes the possibility of spiritual existence in the sense that man may identify with his capacity to reflect, transcend and choose. Furthermore it perceives and pursues a golden thread of consciousness running from the higher unconscious, down through the ego, and into the deepest recesses of what Freud called the "id." Without ignoring the hard reality of human alienation and dividedness psychosynthesis views the depths of man, as well as his heights to be characterized by consciousness of a purposive and creative nature.

The pursuit of this thread of consciousness is seen as leading to a synthesis of the total organism which is variably complete in different people.

Psychosynthesis employs many techniques which are intended to aid integration at an ego or personal self level (Personal Psychosynthesis) or at a Higher Self level (Spiritual Psychosynthesis). The techniques include those gathered from psychoanalysis, behavior therapies and various existential therapies as well as many adopted from

spiritual exercises of eastern and western religions.

The aim of those exercises is to enhance one's identification with consciousness itself and to adopt an active stance over against a widening scope of inner and outer experiences.

Meditation is but one of the techniques used for encountering one's inner world in an active and existential way, reflecting upon its meaning, and visualizing projects for the creative rebuilding of the personality, relationships and human institutions.

Psychosynthesis hopes to encounter false absolutes and idealizations as well as inner material of a profoundly negative and frightening nature with a commitment to the inherent thrust of the *total* human organism toward wholeness.

With this brief description I shall proceed to locate psychosynthesis in relationship to the pastoral counseling movement, contemporary psychological thought.

Pastoral Counseling Today

The pastoral counseling movement today seems to be in the process of becoming increasingly heterogeneous and eclectic in its approach. Following Clinebell (1966) it is helpful to refer to "older" and "revised" models for pastoral counseling. To this analysis I would add the influence of the "human potential" movement which I will discuss later under the category of contemporary psychological thought.

The "older" model centers around five seminal ideal which shaped the approach of pastoral counseling during its formative years.

These are:

- (1) The formal, *structured counselling interview* as the operational model;
- (2) The *client-centered method* as the normative and often exclusive methodology;
- (3) *Insight* as the *central goal* of counselling;
- (4) The concepts of *unconscious motivation* and
- (5) The *childhood roots of adult behavior*.¹

In response to many helpful discoveries in the field of existential and ego psychology, Clinebell sought to broaden the horizon of pastoral counseling to include the following emphases:

- (1) *Using supportive* rather than *uncovering methods*;
- (2) *Improving relationships* (through couple, family, and group methods) rather than aiming at intrapsychic changes;
- (3) *Maximizing and utilizing one's positive personality resources*;
- (4) *Coping successfully with one's current situation and planning for the future* rather than exploring the past extensively;
- (5) *Confronting the realities of one's situation*, including the need to become more responsible, in addition to understanding feelings and attitudes;
- (6) *Making direct efforts to increase the constructiveness and creativity of behavior* as well as feelings and attitudes;
- (7) *Dealing directly with the crucially important vertical dimension* (the dimension of values and ultimate meanings) in relationships as well as the horizontal dimension of physical and psychological interaction.²

The following is a brief abstraction of the differences between the older and revised models showing how without disavowing the value

¹ Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., *Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), p. 28.

² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

of the older model, Clinebell goes beyond it.

He notes that the pastor does a great deal of informal counseling in which the structures of the fifty minute hour are missing, so the formal interview must be regarded as one of several useful approaches.³

While the non-directive approach is a good place to begin (especially for verbal preachers) many people lack the capacity to respond effectively to a totally passive approach, and the counselor needs to bring his whole person to the counseling relationship.⁴

While an emphasis on insight represents a giant advance over advice giving, the minister encounters many people who can attain insight only with great difficulty and, after, a great deal of time. Such people can often be helped by relationship centered counseling.⁵

While some people are able to change behavior through the change of their inner feelings and percepts, others can interrupt inner negative self-feeding patterns through actively changing their outer behavior.⁶

Whereas the past of a man has profound influence on the present in terms of unconscious factors, lack of time and often training preclude extensive exploration. The emphasis is rather on conscious material and current relationships which often serve as a screen upon which the still living past is projected and which are observable to

³*Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 29-31.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 31, 32.

⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 33, 34.

the trained eye.⁷

Though this model is more complex, and liable to misuse through authoritarianism and encouragement of superficial adjustment, the risks are more than offset by gains in increased effectiveness.⁸

It more fully encompasses the heritage of pastoral care which includes the healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling of persons.⁹

The revised model of pastoral counseling represents an effort to deal with man bringing to bear upon his problems the strengths of his personality and existential situation in a more active way. There is a movement away from the negativity of the past and its unconscious aspects, towards a more conscious positive approach. In addition, a willingness to deal directly with spiritual issues is advocated.

Since 1967, when *Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling* was published, a large number of articles have been published in the literature of pastoral counseling advocating similar ideas. There seems to be an ongoing effort to clarify the notion of the self and a view of human personality and interaction which allows for a positive approach to the total human organism.

This effort has not been without its problems, since many schools of psychological thought are quite negative in viewing human depths. Nevertheless, the persistent drift of the movement has been in the direction of discovering creative possibilities at every level

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 34-36.

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 37, 38.

⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

of human nature without denying the actuality of human sin.

Glenn E. Whitlock refers to this in an article on crisis intervention writing,

New approaches to pastoral counseling are being developed at a time when the behavioral sciences in general are undergoing both moderate and radical changes. One of the aspects of this change involves a more active use of the self of the counselor. A more active use of the self has been influenced by developments in contemporary philosophy and by research of the behavioral sciences. Contemporary existential philosophy and the developments in psychotherapy have exerted an influence upon the general practice of counseling and psychotherapy. Emphasis upon the 'here and now' of the various Gestalt-therapeutic techniques, the 'Reality Therapy' of Glasser, the 'Integrity Therapy' of Mauer and the 'Games Theory' of Bern have all emphasized a more active use of self in the counseling and psychotherapeutic role.¹⁰

Contemporary Psychological Thought

In addition to the many schools of thought dealt with by pastoral counseling per se an increasing number of techniques and theories have recently emerged under the general label of "Humanistic Psychology" or, "since it's less a discipline than a protest against a self-limited life, some call it the human-potential movement."¹¹

Though the movement at large may be undisciplined, this cannot be said of many of its leading thinkers including Maslow, Perls, Jourard, Laing, Schutz, Bugental, Frankl, Moustakas, Proffoff, Assagioli, and Boss. Their thinking has constituted a "third force" in

¹⁰ Glenn E. Whitlock, "A New Approach to Pastoral Counseling," *Pastoral Psychology*, XXI:203 (April 1970), 7.

¹¹ Eleanor Criswell and Severin Peterson, "The Whole Soul Catalog," *Psychology Today*, V:11 (April 1972), 58.

contemporary psychology, distinct from behaviorism and psychoanalytic thought, and is characterized by the same concern with the human organism's propensity for growth as recent pastoral counseling thinkers evidence.

The "human potential" movement has led to, and been led by, the publication of a number of new periodicals including the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* and the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*. The *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* is a source of considerable importance for this dissertation. It concerns itself with human experiences which are beyond the range of the normal or the ordinary, yet which are experienced by people who do not necessarily appear to be pathological, and who may even be extraordinarily well adjusted. The range of the concern of the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* appears in its statement of purpose:

The *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* is concerned with the publication of theoretical and applied research, original contributions, empirical papers, articles and studies in meta-needs, ultimate values, unitive consciousness, peak experiences, ecstasy, mystical experience, B values, essence, bliss, awe, wonder, self-actualization, ultimate meaning, transcendence of the self, spirit, sacralization of every day life, oneness, cosmic awareness, cosmic play, individual and species-wide synergy, maximal interpersonal encounter, transcendental phenomena; maximal sensory awareness, responsiveness and expression; and related concepts, experiences and activities. As a statement of purpose, this formulation is to be understood as subject to optional individual or group interpretations, either wholly or in part, with regard to the acceptance of its contents as essentially naturalistic, theistic, supernaturalistic, or any other designated classification.¹²

¹²Anthony J. Sutich, "Some Considerations Regarding Transpersonal Psychology," *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 1:1 (Spring 1969), 18.

In this journal, one finds many articles which deal with the breadth of human experience embraced by psychosynthesis, especially that aspect known as spiritual psychosynthesis.

The *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* tends to deal with the aspects of human experience which fall closer to the norm, but from a standpoint which is often similar to that of psychosynthesis. Since humanistic psychology is a wide field, I shall choose one example, gestalt therapy, to look at more closely.

The methods of gestalt therapy are widespread and its theoretical basis has been clearly formulated and related to older schools by its chief protagonist Fritz Perls.¹³

Gestalt therapy seeks to focus and concentrate *the attention of the ego*¹⁴ in an existential and active relationship toward emerging unconscious introjects, which are looked upon as "undigested" psychic material or "mental food."¹⁵ The ego is urged to aggressively "devour" this material¹⁶ through the process of fantasy, contemplation and personal encounter. Thus a "here and now" approach to the past is maintained. Implicit in this process is a confidence in the deeper aspects of the self.

"In every bit of therapy, we have to go through the implosive

¹³F. S. Perls, *Ego, Hunger and Aggression, The Beginning of Gestalt Therapy* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), pp. 5-8.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 187.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 122.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 200.

layer in order to get to the authentic self. This is where most schools of therapy and therapists shrink away, because they also fear deadness. . . . Once we get through this implosive layer, we see something very peculiar happens. . . explosion happens . . . into joy, into grief, into orgasm, into anger."¹⁷

These two factors among others, the here and now stance toward the past, and confidence in the human organism, have made gestalt therapy an attractive option for the pastoral counseling movement. The colorful language and life of Perls in opposition to traditional concepts has further attracted a wide following among all walks of life. His disapproval of ideals ("what you call an ideal, I call a curse"¹⁸) challenges religion to both examine its "ideals" for hidden unrealities, and to search beyond Perls for further realities that he has perhaps not considered.

Psychosynthesis holds much in common with the gestalt therapy approach, especially its confidence in the human organism, and its holistic view of the human personality. The distinctive aspects of Psychosynthesis (emphasis on the Transpersonal self, super-conscious, and will) I shall treat in a later section, as well as some areas of differing concepts.

¹⁷F. S. Perls, "Four Lectures," in Joan Fagan and Irma Lee Shepherd (eds.) *Gestalt Therapy Now* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 22.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 20.

Education and Therapy at Positive Depth

Perls has tapped unexpected power and resiliency in the human organism, extending the ego adaptive principle to an existential approach for dealing with unconscious aspects of the personality. In an interview in 1968, Perls spoke hopefully of applying gestalt techniques at an educational level, thus widening its impact.¹⁹ This raises the problem of approaching the deeper aspects of the human personality on an educational basis.

The possibility suggested by Perls is an exciting one. Educating, that is "leading forth," the True Self means going through a positive, safe level (the ego or axial level) into a frightening level (the unconscious, id, or primitive level). But this, says Perls, is not the end. Something deeper, the authentic self, is beyond.

The question is, "is there a way of contacting and strengthening this sense of self on a wider learning basis than that of psychotherapy? If so, what is it?"

A way for educating the authentic self by means of certain active spiritual disciplines is suggested by a recent study which compares schizophrenia, which is usually a disintegrative experience, with the mysticism of St. Theresa of Avila, whose experience was very creative. The similarities between schizophrenia and mysticism have often been noted, the differences less often. One of the critical

¹⁹James L. Walker, *Body and Soul* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 185.

differences noted is that the mystic's training and education prepares him for the difficult episodes . . . he encounters.

. . . It can be seen that the schizophrenic is one whose protective shell has been suddenly and prematurely broken. . . . Because of this he is totally unable to deal with the sudden onrush of the social, personal feelings he experiences and his social functioning breaks down. The mystic on the other hand, *through his long training process*, is able to slough the shell off gradually. As he increases his tolerance for those new feelings, he is able to incorporate them into his social living. As the mystic becomes strengthened, he becomes ready for the next step and removes another part of his shell.²⁰

Implied in the above quotation is the notion that the deeper levels of personality can be strengthened by certain "spiritual disciplines." Wapnick quotes Underhill in noting that these disciplines may bring one to "the Illumination of the Self," a joyous experience, which is often followed by "the Dark Night of the Soul," in which profound alienation, depression and loneliness are experienced. (This sounds very much like the implosive stage of Perls.)²¹ The next stage, "the Unitive Life" consists of the obliteration of the senses, so that nothing, *no thing*, is experienced. This is a state of pure consciousness. The final stage involves a reinvolvement in the life of the world with renewed vigor.²² (The foregoing was the experience of St. Theresa who spent her life actively, founding eighteen convents

²⁰Kenneth Wapnick, "Mysticism, and Schizophrenia," *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 1:2 (Fall 1969), 64.

²¹Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-102.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 52.

among other things.)²³

St. Theresa was sustained through her experience by an inner faith in, and experience of God, shared with a community through common disciplines.

My concern is that while the Christian Church holds a view of humanity which affirms such positive depths, it has yet to find a psychology to match it. Perhaps for this reason, the Protestant wing of the church at least, has seldom developed an approach to teaching which gives deep help to disturbed people. Psychoprophylaxis at such a level is almost non-existent. Both conceptually and methodologically psychosynthesis has something to offer the church in positive depth education.

The depth aspect of Protestant pastoral counseling often suffers from an inadequate psychology. While psychologies with negative views of unconscious depths abound, schools of thought as affirmative of human depth as that expressed by St. Theresa are few and seldom adequately developed.

An effort in formulating a psychological model with an affirmative view of human depths is represented by an article by Benedict M. Ashley. In seeking to describe the spiritual dimension of human personality he writes:

In the psychological model which I am proposing, the fourth or spiritual dimension of human personality can be thought of as that region of the psyche

²³*Ibid.*, p. 56.

which is 'above' the conscious self just as in the Freudian model we speak of the Id as 'below conscious self'.²⁴

He notes that man's rational life which centers in the ego, draws its vitality from insight, intuition, creation and invention, and that these have their origin in the super-conscious.²⁵

While the ego tends to grasp reality piecemeal, the spiritual pull of the psyche of man is in contact with reality in its wholeness, largely via the intuitive function.²⁶

He seeks to relate this psychological model to a dynamic model, and chooses the ancient threefold mystical way of purgation, illumination, and unitive experience by which mystics have described their development for ages. In referring to this superconscious process he concludes, "It is an aspect of the total behavior of a human being which is related or interpenetrates every other psychological process. It is, however, that factor in human behavior which is most specifically human, which makes man the intuitive, creative being that he is, open to infinity, and especially to the depths of other persons."

A pastoral counselor is a man who is himself vulnerable to this kind of deep encounter and who strives to help others liberate within themselves this deepest of all human power."²⁷

²⁴Benedict M. Ashley, O.P., Ph.D., "A Psychological Model with a Spiritual Dimension," *Pastoral Psychology*, XXIII:224 (May 1972), 34.

²⁵*Ibid.*

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 36.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 40.

A Glimpse at Psychosynthesis

Thus far I have described some emphases of pastoral counseling and contemporary psychology, and the need for a therapeutic and educational model which functions at the level of positive depth, reinforcing human potential at the deepest possible level. I described the work of Fritz Perls as establishing an existential intrapsychic relationship between the ego and negative introjects, thus enabling the personality to assimilate undigested psychic material without abandoning the "here and now." I further suggested that there may be resources even beyond what Perls speaks of, and forwarded material from a study of schizophrenia and mysticism to hint that these resources might lie in the area of faith, community and discipline in the sense of "training."

At this juncture of our discussion, it seems appropriate to introduce some of the principles of Psychosynthesis.

Psychosynthesis, it must be said from the outset, "is essentially an open and not a closed system. It is a frame of reference which includes the biological, the psychological and also the spiritual, philosophical and ethical realms and hence, strives to be comprehensive and inclusive without being eclectic."²⁸

Psychosynthesis may be compared with existential psychology and psychotherapy, in its emphasis on the person's *Identity*, and *growth*,

²⁸Graham C. Taylor, M.D., *The Essentials of Psychosynthesis* (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 1968), p. 4.

on the importance of *meaning, values, responsibility*, and on the importance of *anxiety* and the dynamic role of the future in the present.²⁹

This, it seems to me, is the level at which gestalt therapy operates. Thus Psychosynthesis shares much of what may be found in the literature of that school of thought.

The differences between Psychosynthesis and most existential psychotherapies is as follows.

1. Psychosynthesis emphasizes the *will* as an essential function of the self. Assagioli notes that this is perhaps the most distinctive point of psychosynthesis.³⁰ This understanding leads to a careful analysis of the various phases of the will, and the use of specific techniques for developing and rightly directing the will.

2. The self in psychosynthesis is regarded as a reality, a living entity which it is possible to experience directly. In most cases the unifying center will first be on the personal level--the personal self. After there has been a reasonable degree of integration on this level, there may be a gradual expansion of the personal consciousness towards the transpersonal or universal level.³¹

3. Another difference from certain existentialist trends is

²⁹Roberto Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis: A Manual of Principles and Techniques* (New York: Hobbs, Dorman, 1965), p. 4.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 5.

³¹Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

the recognition of the positive, joyous creative experiences which man does have, along with the tragic ones. These are actively fostered or induced through the use of appropriate methods.³²

4. The experience of *loneliness* is not considered either essential or ultimate in psychosynthesis, rather it is seen as a subjective condition which alternates with, and may be substituted by, living communication with others.³³

5. The psychosynthesis employs deliberate use of a large number of *active techniques* for:

- (a) The transformation, sublimation and direction of psychological energies.
- (b) The strengthening and maturing of weak or underdeveloped functions.
- (c) The activation of superconscious energies and the arousing of latent potentialities.³⁴

(It should be noted, Psychosynthesis shares emphases 3, 4 and 5 with Gestalt Therapy.)

6. The conscious and planned reconstruction of the personality is effected through the cooperation and interplay of the patient and therapist.³⁵

7. Psychosynthesis conceives of a higher unconscious or "super conscious." It is the source of the higher feelings, such as altruistic love; of genius and of the states of contemplation, illumination, and ecstasy. It is this area that provides numerous symbols

³² Assagioli, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

which may be evoked by various techniques.³⁶

The key concept seems to me to be that of the Self, which has both personal and transpersonal qualities, and which is best described as a "center of pure consciousness." The Self is differentiated from the *contents* of consciousness,³⁷ is regarded as a causative given, which "projects dynamic influence but remains motionless."³⁸

The Self in Psychosynthesis is in many ways similar to Maslow's concept of "an essential inner nature," or "inner core."³⁹

Assagioli maintains this self can be experienced directly, and that contact with it provides men with a foothold at the very core of his being from which otherwise impossible heights and depths and breadth may be traversed. While it is too early to equate the Self with God or the image of God, these phenomena have some aspects in common.

It seems to me this experience of the Self would involve a shifting of the center of existence from the "egoic" level of axial existence to the Self level of spiritual existence.

³⁶Roberto Assagioli, *Symbols of Transpersonal Experiences* (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 1969).

³⁷Frank Haronian, *Psychosynthesis, a Psychotherapeutic Personal Overview* (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 1970), p. 6.

³⁸Graham C. Taylor, M.D., *Approaches to the Self: The "Who Am I?" Techniques in Psychotherapy* (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 1968), p. 9.

³⁹Abraham Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1962), pp. 177-200.

Laing writes, "True sanity entails in one way or another the dissolution of the normal ego, the false self competently adjusted to our alienated social reality; the emergence of the inner archetypal mediators of divine power, and through this death a rebirth, and the eventual reestablishment of a new kind of ego functioning, the ego now being the servant of the divine, no longer its betrayer."⁴⁰

While this is an arduous and lengthy task, Christians may see it as part of the cost of discipleship. In the effort to synthesize the opposing forces of personality, family, church, community, nation and world, a center somehow "other" than all of these, yet intimately related to all, is the keynote of Christian faith. The presence of this concept at the heart of the open system of psychological thought called psychosynthesis is of considerable significance for pastoral counseling. And the educational and therapeutic techniques issuing from such a concept may be of value.

Summary

I have characterized the church as being frustrated in efforts to mobilize its own need satisfying resources. Pastoral counseling, a facilitating arm of the church, has adopted an ego adaptive (revised) model for the counseling process, moving beyond a Rogerian and psycho-analytic model. The human potential movement has recently influenced

⁴⁰R. D. Laing, *The Politics of Experience* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967).

Pastoral Counseling, Gestalt Therapy being a large factor, with its positive approach to human depths. The need for this approach was illustrated through reference to a study on schizophrenia and mysticism. Psychosynthesis, which may be considered as part of a "fourth force" beyond humanistic psychology called Transpersonal Psychology, was briefly discussed. It was suggested that psychosynthesis may offer resources to pastoral counseling through its concept of the human personality, and through possibly valuable techniques of therapy and education.

CHAPTER I

SOME KEY CONCEPTS IN PSYCHOSYNTHESIS

Before I begin with the task of analyzing Psychosynthesis I shall present a brief history and a discussion of some of its key concepts. The school of thought is, after all, just becoming widely known. Furthermore some of its concepts share linguistic description with other psychologies while meaning something quite different.

I have chosen to discuss "the self," "the will," and "the superconscious," because they seem to express the unique concerns and contributions of Psychosynthesis. In so doing, I admit to unavoidably deleting a great deal of material that is the common property of Psychosynthesis and dynamic psychology at large.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Dr. Roberto Assagioli was born in Venice, Italy in 1888, and took his medical degree at the University of Florence. There, he specialized in neurology and psychiatry and wrote his doctoral thesis in Psychoanalysis pointing out what he considered to be some of the limitations of Freud's views.¹

He gradually developed the ideas and techniques of psychosyn-

¹Roberto Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis, A Manual of Principles and Techniques* (New York: Hobbs-Dorman, 1965), p. 280.

thesis in his psychotherapeutic practice, founding the "Istituto di Psicosintesi" in Rome in 1926. He published several articles during this time including, "A New Method of Healing--Psychosynthesis," in 1927. After World War II the "Istituto di Psicosintesi" resumed its activities in Florence, Italy (Via San Domenico 16) where Dr. Assagioli practices today, at the age of 83.

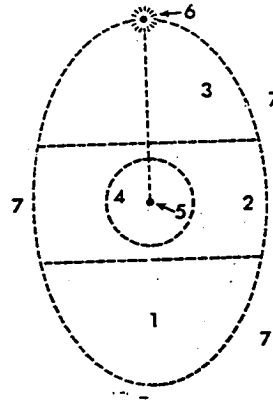
The Psychosynthesis Research Foundation has since become international in scope with centers in France, Greece, England, the United States, India, and Argentina. The foundation publishes german papers and articles, and holds seminars, to foster research and disseminate information.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE PERSONALITY

It is the effort of Assagioli to arrive at a pluridimensional conception of the human personality. He begins this difficult task by presenting the following diagram which, although he admits it is crude and elementary and can only give a structural, static, representation of our inner constitution while leaving out its dynamic aspect, represents an important and essential step in explicating his theory of personality. Admitting the foregoing shortcomings, he presents the chart as follows:²

²*Ibid.*, p. 17.

1. The lower unconscious
2. The middle unconscious
3. The higher unconscious or super-conscious
4. The field of consciousness
5. The conscious self or "I"
6. The higher self
7. The collective unconscious



1. *The Lower Unconscious.* This contains:

- A. The elementary psychological activities which direct the life of the body; the intelligent coordination of bodily functions.
- B. The fundamental drives and primitive urges.
- C. Many complexes, charged with intense emotion.
- D. Dreams and images of an inferior kind.
- E. Lower, uncontrolled parapsychological processes.
- F. Various pathological manifestations, such as phobias, obsessions, compulsive urges and paranoid delusions.

2. *The Middle Unconscious.* This is formed of psychological elements similar to those of our waking consciousness and easily accessible to it. In this inner region our various experiences are assimilated, our ordinary mental and imaginative activities are elaborated and developed in a sort of psychological gestation before their birth into the light of consciousness.

3. *The Higher Unconscious or Super Conscious.* From this region we receive our higher intuition and inspirations--artistic, philosophical or scientific, ethical "imperatives" and urges to

humanitarian and heroic action. It is the source of the higher feelings, such as altruistic love; of genius and of the states of contemplation, illumination, and ecstasy. In this realm are latent the higher psychic functions and spiritual energies.

4. *The Field of Consciousness.* This term--which is not quite accurate but which is clear and convenient for practical purposes--is used to designate that part of our personality of which we are directly aware: the incessant flow of sensation, images, thoughts, feelings, desires, and impulses which we can observe, analyze, and judge.

5. *The Conscious Self of "I".* The "self," that is to say, the point of pure self-awareness, is often confused with the conscious personality just described, but in reality it is quite different from it. This can be ascertained by the use of careful introspection. The changing *contents* of our consciousness (the sensations, thoughts, feelings, etc.) are one thing, while the "I," the self, the *center* of our consciousness is another. From a certain point of view this difference can be compared to that existing between the white lighted area on a screen and the various pictures which are projected upon it. Most people drift on the surface of the "mind stream" and identify themselves with its successive waves, with the changing *content* of their consciousness.

6. *The Higher Self.* The conscious self is generally not only submerged in the ceaseless flow of psychological contents but seems to disappear altogether when we fall asleep, when we faint, when we are

under the affect of an anesthetic or narcotic, or in a state of hypnosis. And when we awake the self mysteriously reappears, we do not know how or whence--a fact which, if closely examined, is truly baffling and disturbing. This leads us to assume that the reappearance of the conscious self or ego is due to the existence of a permanent center, of a true Self situated beyond or "above" it. Assagioli notes that the higher self should not be confused in any way with the super ego of Freud, which is not a real self but according to Freud's theory, a construction, an artificial product. It is also different from any phenomenological concept of the self or ego.

As evidence of the higher Self Assagioli refers to a number of authors including Bucke (*Cosmic Consciousness*), Underhill (*Mysticism*), Kant, and Herbart, and to the techniques of Jung (The Process of Individuation), Desoille (Reve Eveille) and to the techniques of Raja Yoga.

7. *The Collective Unconscious.* Human beings are not isolated, they are not "monads without windows" as Leibnitz thought. They at times feel subjectively isolated, but the extreme existentialistic conception is not true, either psychologically or spiritually.

The outer line of the oval of the diagram should be regarded as "delimiting" but not as "dividing." It should be regarded as analogous to the membrane delimiting a cell, which permits a constant and active interchange with the whole body to which the cell belongs. Processes of "psychological osmosis" are going on all the time, both with other human beings and with the general psychic environment. The

latter corresponds to what Jung has called the "collective unconscious"; but he has not clearly defined his term in which he includes elements of different, even opposite natures, namely primitive archaic structures and higher, forward directed activities of a super conscious character.³

The foregoing comprises a schematic explanation of Assagioli's view of the human personality. It is intended by him (and by me) to simply lend structure to further discussion. As I proceed to a fuller explanation of specifics, it will become apparent that this is so.

THE SELF

The point of departure for understanding the uniqueness of Psychosynthesis is most certainly the concept of the personal self or observing "I." This is most easily understood experientially by most people through the experience of the imagination. Closing the eyes, most people can in a short time, become aware of a changing flow of imagery and ideas within their own personality. When it is pointed out that *they* somehow remain the same although their imagery and ideas change quite rapidly, the germ of awareness that their identity is beyond a great deal of their experience, begins to emerge.

The concept of the observing "I" or personal self is not unique to Psychosynthesis, however its emphasis places a great deal of importance on that function of humanity which Chardin regarded as

³C. G. Jung, *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1928), pp. 118-119.

the hallmark of human evolution, the faculty of reflection.⁴

Teilhard de Chardin observes that the evolution of the planet earth took place in ever diversifying branches until humanity appeared on the scene. With the emergence of humanity and human capacity to reflect on its experience the shape of evolution has been turned over so that instead of being a tree branching out at the top it becomes a cone shaped spiral in which man's heightened and widening consciousness emerges from an ever-rising center of reflection. This in turn dominates the development of the earth.

This phenomenon is heightened and accentuated through the concept of the personal self or observing I. In order to facilitate this process Assagioli uses what he calls an exercise in disidentification. Briefly, the patient is asked to affirm that he is a "center of pure consciousness." He is then asked to think about his thoughts, feelings, imaginings, relationships, his body, in short anything which is imaginable and objectifiable. He then reflects upon these phenomena affirming that he is not limited to any of these things but rather he is "himself, a center of pure consciousness."⁵ The personal self or observing I thus becomes experienced as a center of affirmative transcendence.

Many people upon first hearing this concept are repelled by it,

⁴Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), p. 165.

⁵Assagioli, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

probably because of the negative form that transcendence has taken in our culture. A frequent response is "why would you want to reject your body?" In fact this notion is an affirmation of one's body, one's thoughts, feelings, relationships, ability to reason, the totality of one's experience. It is, however, a refusal to be limited by any of these things. It is an effort to put the center of consciousness, being, and *willing* beyond the limitations of experience. One might say it is a stance of complete subjectivity.

This notion needs some explanation simply because of the prevalent Greek idea that reason is *the* superior function of humanity, and that feelings are to be subordinated to reason. This puts the *center of consciousness* within the thinking function of humanity, and has had a tendency to cut men off from their emotional, bodily, affective modes of being. The psychosynthetic view of the personal self however places action, emotion, reason, and will under the over-arching transcendence of pure consciousness. Thus the holistic stance is maintained, the totality of experience is embraced, and the "here and now" encountered.

The Higher Self

Beyond the personal self, the center or core of pure self-awareness, Assagioli postulates a permanent higher Self or true Self. "This Self is above, and unaffected by, the flow of the mind stream or by bodily conditions; and the personal conscious self should be considered merely as its reflection, its 'projection' in the field of the

personality. At the present stage of psychological investigation little is definitely known concerning the Self, but the importance of this synthesizing center well warrants further research."⁶

"The real distinguishing factor between the little self and the higher Self is that the little self is acutely aware of itself as a distinct separate individual and a sense of solitude or of separation sometimes comes in the existential experience. In contrast, the experience of the Spiritual Self is a sense of freedom, of expansion, of communication with other Selves and with reality, and there is a sense of universality. It feels itself at the same time individual and universal."⁷

Dr. Graham C. Taylor reports a personal conversation with Dr. Assagioli in 1966 in which Assagioli stated that the "personal self or I is 'self-centered'; it is the awareness of one's self without any expansion of consciousness, without the joy, the love, and all the other qualities of spiritual Self."⁸

Regarding the "super conscious," the "personal self," and the "higher self," he said:

There is an important point that needs clarification because there is great confusion among psychologists about it. A basic difference exists between super conscious activities and functions, even at the highest order, and the Self. In the super conscious,

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁸Graham C. Taylor, *Approaches to the Self, The "Who Am I?" Approach in Psychotherapy* (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 1968), p. 9.

intense activities are going on; it is creative. The Self instead is a pure center of spiritual awareness, not active in *itself*; it *projects* dynamic influences but remains motionless, as we might say. (Aristotle called God the 'unmoved mover.') Another image is the sun, which projects rays and streams of energies without descending from its position, without coming near the earth. Many have had high spiritual experiences, either by raising the center of consciousness, the ego, up to super conscious levels, or by opening the field of personal consciousness to the flow of super conscious contents (inspiration). But that is not the realization of the Spiritual Self. The former is typical of poets, writers and artists. Some of these have given expression to high contents of the super conscious, but with no Self-awareness; they are like channels, almost like mediums in some cases. This explains the baffling psychology of the artist; how an artist can express at different times the highest and the lowest.⁹

Speaking further of the relationship between the personal self and the higher Self, Assagioli says,

. . . The Self is the universal, but I am aware that I am that Self and that Self is the essence of myself. It is well to emphasize this point because there are many who assert that the undoing, the destruction, the elimination of the ego is necessary in order to have spiritual realization. Others state instead it can be a gradual inner conquest, reaching ever higher and wider expansions of awareness. One might say that both processes occur, but that the term 'destruction' is misleading, because what is destroyed are the limitations and involvements of the ego, not its central core, which is a reflection of the spiritual Self.¹⁰

It is clear that from Assagioli's view the personal self and the higher Self are totally subjective phenomena, which it is not possible to objectify. While the personal self may objectify the totality of experience, neither the personal nor Higher Self can be objectified. All of our speech concerning the self or the Self is beleaguered by the constant illusion of objectification. It is the objectification of this phenomenon which has led to the rejection of the Greek idea of

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

a soul. The notion that man *has* a soul is erroneous and does not match up with the kind of experience that Assagioli is talking about. That man *is* a soul in the sense that he is a center of pure consciousness begins to approach the notion that he seems to be referring to. It is therefore necessary to proceed in discussing the personal and higher self with extreme care, ever mindful of our own tendency to objectify these phenomena, to fail to make the distinction between consciousness and the field of consciousness, between being and experience, which is so vital not only to the works of Assagioli but also to the concepts of Judaism and Christianity. This fact becomes especially apparent when we see the distinction Assagioli makes between the Self and the super conscious.

One distinction which seems to emerge in the difference between the Self and super conscious is *the degree of objectifiability*. The Self is subjectivity pure and simple. The symbolic contents of the super conscious is in some measure objectifiable. In a detailed discussion of the contents of the super conscious Assagioli refers to this symbolic nature.¹¹ It would seem the contents of the super conscious could become a part of the "mind stream" of our experience. The descent of such contents into our awareness constitutes an intrusion of a wider reality.¹² One might say that these are archetypal

¹¹Roberto Assagioli, *Symbols of Transpersonal Experiences* (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 1969), p. 34.

¹²Roberto Assagioli, *Jung and Psychosynthesis* (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 1966), p. 17.

symbols or images which invade our consciousness or which we may choose to rise toward. As such they are capable of a certain amount of objectification.

On the other hand the direct experience of the Self is seen as being something else entirely. It is truly ineffable. And in order to experience it, "What has to be achieved is to expand the personal consciousness into that of the Self; to reach up, following the thread or ray to the stars; to unite the lower with the higher Self."¹³

In this case the personal consciousness seeks to rise to the Self and achieves a momentary union. The individual continues to feel "present" and active, while participating in a far wider type of consciousness.¹⁴ (How this view differs from pantheism is ably explained by Teilhard de Chardin.)¹⁵

This view of the Self seems to be consistent with that of Radhakrishnan. "The true subject or the self is not an object which we can find in knowledge where it is the very condition of knowledge. It is different from all objects, the body, the sense, the empirical self itself. We cannot make the subject the property of any substance or the effect of any cause, it is the basis of all such relations. It is not the empirical self but the reality without which there could

¹³ Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis, A Manual*, p. 24.

¹⁴ Assagioli, *Jung and Psychosynthesis*, p. 17.

¹⁵ Teilhard de Chardin, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

not be any such thing as empirical self."¹⁶

Jungian and Assagiolian Views of the Self

Among psychotherapists, Jung is the closest and most akin to the conceptions and practices of Psychosynthesis.¹⁷ There are some similarities as well as differences between the view of Jung and Assagioli. Because of the vastness of Jung's writings, only a brief outline of the Jungian position is attempted, after which Assagioli's comments will be added.¹⁸ In Jung's words "The self is not only the center but also the circumference that encloses consciousness and the unconscious; it is the center of this totality as the ego is the center of consciousness."¹⁹ The self provides, on the one hand, an awareness of one's unique nature, and on the other hand, a feeling of oneness with the cosmos. It will be noted that this interpretation of Jung's view of the self is parallel with that of Assagioli; namely, it includes both an individual and a transpersonal or universal element.

For Jung, the experience of the self is archetypal, and may be portrayed in dreams and visions. It would seem to be essentially psychological in nature. "The self could be characterized as a kind

¹⁶Clark Moustakas, *The Self Explorations in Personal Growth* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), p. 115.

¹⁷Assagioli, *Jung and Psychosynthesis*, p. 1.

¹⁸Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

¹⁹C. G. Jung, *The Integration of the Personality* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1940), p. 96.

of compensation for the conflict between inside and outside. This formulation would not be unfitting, since the self has somewhat the character of a result, of a goal attained, something that has come to pass very gradually and is experienced with much travail. So to the self is our life's goal, for it is the completed expression of that fateful combination that we call individuality, the full flowering not only of the single individual, but of the group, in which each adds his portion to the whole."²⁰

This view seems somewhat different than the view held by Assagioli. Concerning the difference Assagioli has this to say:

'For Jung, the self is a psychological function,' a 'point between the conscious and the unconscious,' and he doesn't attribute to it any transcendent reality. He sticks to the empirical standpoint--the agnostic standpoint--and this shows that he has not had the genuine spiritual experience of the Self. If he had had, he'd speak in a different way. He considers the self to be the result of a psychological process, of 'individuation.' It is not for him a living reality which is latent but of which we can become directly, experientially aware. Thus there is a great difference between the two definitions. According to one, the self is a psychological concept; according to the other it is a living reality--even more, a living Entity. The self is the Subject par excellence. Jung's Self is merely 'psychological': the spiritual self is a transcendent, glorious reality, and one can have direct, immediate proof of it; that is, one can experience it.²¹

In the language of the Existentialists, one might say that Jung views the self as "becoming," while Assagioli views the self as "being."

²⁰C. G. Jung, *Depth Psychology* (New York: Norton, 1966), p. 338.

²¹Taylor, *op. cit.*

The Self in Current Psychological Thought

The view of the self as explained by Assagioli needs to be sharply distinguished from that used in much modern psychology.

The following discussion of the self in *Theories of Personality* is helpful in placing the term within the spectrum of psychological thought.

The term *self* as used in modern psychology has come to have two distinct meanings. On the one hand it is defined as the person's attitudes and feelings about himself, and on the other hand it is regarded as a group of psychological processes which govern behavior and adjustment. The first meaning may be called the *self-as-object* definition since it denotes the person's attitudes, feelings, perceptions, and evaluations of himself as an object. In this sense it is what a person thinks of himself. The second meaning may be called the *self-as-process* definition. The self is a doer, in the sense that it consists of an active group of processes such as thinking, remembering, and perceiving.²²

Hall and Lindzey note that the two conceptions of the self are so distinctly different that it would be better to have separate terms for them. Some writers have adopted the convention of using the term *ego* when they wish to refer to the group of psychological processes, and to reserve the term *self* for the person's system of conceptions of himself. However, this convention is not universally followed. Sometimes the term *self* and *ego* are employed in just the opposite sense from the one given above, or sometimes one of them, either the *ego* or the *self*, is used to designate both the processes and the object that is perceived. (This discussion indicates just how difficult the

²²Calvin S. Hall and Gardner Lindzey, *Theories of Personality* (New York: Wiley, 1966), p. 468.

problem is!)

It should be pointed out and clearly understood that according to Hall and Lindzey no modern theory of the self holds that there is a psychic agent or "inner manikin" which regulates man's actions. The self, whether it be conceived as object or as process or both, is not an homunculus or "man within the breast" or soul; rather it refers to the object of psychological processes or to those processes themselves, and these processes are, assumed to be governed by the principal of causality. In other words the self is not a metaphysical or religious concept; it is a concept that falls within the domain of a "scientific psychology."

Examples of the above approach may be found in the writings of Harry Stack Sullivan who notes, "the self may be said to be made up of reflected appraisals."²³

James Bugental notes along a similar line, that "the common element abstracted out of many and diverse perceptions of the one 'Me' may be named the Self."²⁴

A view somewhat closer to that of Assagioli on the other hand is expressed by Ludwig Binswanger. In quoting Søren Kierkegaard (*Sickness unto Death*) Binswanger writes,

²³Harry Stack Sullivan, *Conceptions of Modern Psychiatry* (London: Tavistock, 1955), p. 10.

²⁴James F. T. Bugental, *The Search for Authenticity* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965), p. 201.

That the self can only ground itself with a view to the power which posited it, is a truth (which) Ontological *Daseinsanalytic* recognizes as much as does anthropological existential analysis, quite apart from how they define this power, this existential ground.²⁵

Of all of the contemporary psychologists the views of Abraham Maslow are the most suggestive of the view of the self forwarded by Assagioli. Instead of using the word *self* Maslow posits an "essential inner nature or core" which is given, and natural. It is instinctoid, fragile, and yet extremely resilient, open to scientific investigation and is definitely not "evil" but is either what may be called "good" or else is neutral.²⁶

Maslow is one of an increasing number of humanistic psychologists who feel that the notion of causality as it has been interpreted in the past simply cannot embrace the phenomenon of Man.

His thrust towards reflective consciousness, and his ability to, upon occasion, give and receive unconditional affirmation are two concepts which simply cannot be adequately explained by a strict causal-connective model of reality.

Spurred on by a need to explain the above phenomena adequately, and aided along the way by diverse fields of thought such as nuclear and quantum physics which offer a more plastic view of the universe, humanistic psychologists have sought explanations for human phenomena

²⁵Ludwig Binswanger, "The Case of Ellen West," in Rollo May, *et al.*, *Existence* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958), p. 298.

²⁶Abraham Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1962), pp. 178-181.

seemingly related to something other than interior or exterior necessity, or drive.

This had led to a renewed interest in a species-specific nature of man, and in a search for explanations for dimensions of human experience which are acausal.

Transpersonal psychology is especially interested in these — questions. They have been led to reconsider the esoteric notion of non-Karmic dimensions of experience related to the chakras or energy centers higher than the heart level. All of this sounds very much like agape, a phenomenon related to the active Presence of God in Christ, in Christianity.²⁷

Maslow insists, and I am sure Assagioli agrees, that these acausal experiences are fit topics for empirical study, given a world view which can include the possibility of their happening.

It is precisely here that the whole issue of a growth versus a medical model of human personality comes into focus. If the goal of the organism is exhaustion we do therapy conservatively. If it is infinite complexity and harmony, if we see existence as an "adventure,"²⁸ a thrust towards greater stimulation and experience, we do therapy somewhat more liberally. But if the latter is true, from whence and toward hence does this organismic energy field flow?

²⁷ Elmer E. Green and M. Alyce, "On the Meaning of Transpersonal: Some Metaphysical Perspectives," *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, III:1 (1971), 38.

²⁸ John B. Cobb, Jr., *A Christian Natural Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), p. 217.

One effort to answer this question is Assagioli's concept of the Self--a center of sheer being, whose presence may be experienced, and which experience is "wirklich," effectual, and thus issues in phenomena which is amenable to empirical study.

If the answer is different than the ones proposed by the writers surveyed in "Theories of Personality" in the 60's, perhaps it is because we are no longer asking the old questions. Their answers, after all, have failed to bring humanity solutions to its most pressing problems.

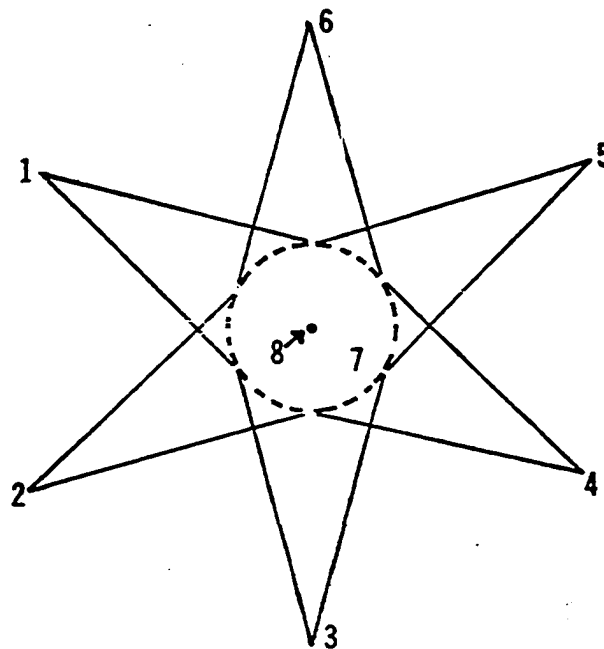
THE WILL

In a certain sense the will is something of a mystery, and if academic psychologists have neglected desire, they have for the most part *ignored* the existence of the will. Assagioli quotes in this connection the *Dictionary of Psychological and Psychoanalytic Terms*. Under the item "will" and "voluntary action" it says: "Scientific psychology has not yet reached the point where it is possible to define how these terms should be used; and yet it does not seem possible to do without the concept of a praxis of behavior patterns that should be termed voluntary and which differ from other patterns in various ill defined ways."²⁹ Despite the vagueness of this definition Assagioli feels he can detect a rather tight lipped admission that there exists this disturbing something in psychology which is the will.

²⁹ Assagioli, *Jung and Psychosynthesis*, p. 4.

One of the reasons for this mystery about the will lies in its intimate association with the "I," the subject, the center of consciousness. Since the self is intimately connected with all the functions of the personality, if one's self consciousness is vague and dim, then it is not surprising that one's sense of its fundamental function --the will--is equally confused and faint. Assagioli lists the following diagram as helpful in explaining the role of the will in psychological functions.

THE CENTER OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FUNCTIONS



- 1. Sensation
- 2. Motion--feeling
- 3. Imagination
- 4. Impulse--desire

- 5. Thought
- 6. Intuition
- 7. Will
- 8. Central point: "I" or ego

The triangles starting from the central circle represent the psychic functions: sensation; emotion; imagination; impulse and

desire; thought; and intuition. The will occupies a position apart from the others, a central position indicated by the circular area surrounding the point of self consciousness, the "I" or ego.³⁰

Psychosynthesis emphasizes the will as being the function most intimate with the self. In this respect Assagioli is aware that he may be accused of resurrecting the will of 19th century psychology, but the latter was based essentially on the conscious aspect of personality and disregarded the unconscious forces which Freud, Jung, and others emphasized. The diagram above indicates Assagioli recognizes these unconscious forces and includes them under the reign of the will, to a greater or lesser degree.

It is important in Psychosynthesis to discriminate between the will based on unconscious motivation and the true will of the personal self. Assagioli thinks that there is such a thing as the "unconscious will" of the higher Self which is intimately related to the personal self and which tends always to bring the personality in line with the over all purpose of the Higher Self.³¹ Although it is acknowledged that in many people only a personal psychosynthesis is possible, one of the purposes and goals of a *spiritual* psychosynthesis is to make this "unconscious will" of Spiritual self a conscious experience.

Assagioli further states that "the strength of the will alone as it has been pointed out, is not enough; the will must also be

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³¹ Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis, A Manual*, p. 88.

intelligent and skillful. Before we start any external action which brings out visible results, the will must first work from within, from the mind, and from there influence the various energies that play within us. Modern psychology has shown that we cannot perform the simplest voluntary act, for instance the movement of a muscle, unless the image of the movement has first been invoked."³²

Assagioli's techniques for the training of the will stem from his understanding of principle facts and laws which govern psychological life. These are as follows:

1. Images, mental pictures and ideas, tend to produce the physical conditions and external acts that correspond to them.
2. Attitudes, movements and actions tend to evoke and intensify the ideas, images, emotions and feelings that correspond to them.
3. Ideas and images tend to awaken emotion and feelings that correspond to them.
4. Emotions and impressions tend to awaken and intensify ideas and images that correspond to or are associated with them.
5. Attention, interest, affirmations and repetitions reinforce the ideas and images on which they are centered.
6. The repetitions of actions intensifies the urge to further reiteration and renders the execution easier and better, until they come to be performed unconsciously.
7. Ideas, images, emotions, feelings and drives combine and

³²Roberto Assagioli, *The Training of the Will* (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 1966), p. 12.

group themselves, forming psychological complexes.

8. Psychological complexes find and use--without our awareness, independent of or even against our will--the means of achieving their aims.

9. Psychological energies which remain unexpressed and are not discharged into action accumulate, operate and are transformed in the unconscious, and can produce physical effects.³³

From this understanding of the function of the psyche, arises an awareness of the importance of using the will skillfully, not opposing drives and impulses blindly, or following them blindly, but in connecting all the functions of the psyche with the will in a wise way which as much as possible is in tune with the unconscious will of the higher Self.

Because of this understanding many of the techniques of Psycho-synthesis revolve around the use of meditative techniques which focus the attention and the will upon symbols and images which have proven to be creative and integrative through centuries of human history. These techniques will be dealt with extensively in the section on Methods. At this time it is sufficient to point out that one of the prominent contemporary psychotherapeutic approaches (Gestalt therapy) employs many of these same techniques in the dissolution of negative introjects.³⁴

³³*Ibid.*, pp. 14-16.

³⁴F. S. Perls, *Ego Hunger and Aggression* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969).

Assagioli along with all the great religions of the world, believes that it is possible to become aware of "the good will." Discovering the good will confronts us with two problems of the greatest practical importance. They are the relation of our will to that of others, and the relation of our will to the universal will.

Incalculable is the enormous wastage of physical and psychological energies, of time and money, of volitional energy, and the sum of human suffering bred from these struggles. Truly, our civilization has adopted ways of life that are as uneconomic, wasteful and as exhausting as if they are the reverse of spiritual. This has been a matter of deep concern to those who are practical in a truly spiritual sense. They have endeavored and are endeavoring to replace competition by cooperation, conflict by arbitration and agreements, based on understanding of the right relationships between groups, classes and nations. The success of this attempt, however must depend in a large measure on the harmonization of the wills of all concerned, so that their differing aims may be made to fit into the circle of the superior human solidarity.³⁵

Following the rules for the functioning of psychological activity which were listed above, Assagioli suggests that the harmonization of human will with the universal will may be facilitated through the use of symbols of transpersonal experiences,³⁶ and through the use of evocative words such as "calm," joy, love, gratitude, etc.³⁷ One might say in these instances the use of imagery from the "super conscious" objectifies and approximates the Higher Will.

³⁵ Assagioli, *The Training of the Will*, p. 17.

³⁶ Assagioli, *Symbols of Transpersonal Experience*, p. 1.

³⁷ Roberto Assagioli, *Technique of Evocative Words* (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 1970), p. 5.

In making the connection between the personal and higher wills, the intimate connection between the will and intuition is important to note. In one technique for the strengthening of the intuitive function, the will is used first in a negative sense to clear the field of consciousness of other functions which generally have a spontaneous and uninterrupted activity. Metaphorically the effort is to insure that the projection screen is clear and white. In the second stage the will is used to enable the person to wait quietly for the result of the approach of an intuitive experience of reality or truth. Finally the will is exercised in writing down the fleeting intuition and checking it later against the collected wisdom and spiritual intuition of humanity and against one's own other intuitions.

On a less esoteric level, Assagioli notes that the will is the central and fundamental function of the ego.³⁸ The will is not only and simply "will power" according to the usual conception. It includes five phases or stages, all necessary for its complete and effective expression. (1) Motivation--goal--deliberation; (2) Decision; (3) Affirmation--command; (4) Planning; (5) Direction of the execution of the plan. The will therefore may be trained at any of the foregoing levels. This analysis of the functions of the will opens up a whole host of possibilities for personal development which have heretofore not been considered. Many of these will be discussed in the section dealing with techniques for training of the will.

³⁸ Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis, A Manual*, p. 7.

IMAGINATION: THE SUPER CONSCIOUS

Although peripheral to the personal self and the higher Self in Assagioli's thinking, the super conscious represents one of the most important concepts of Psychosynthesis and comprises what Victor Frankl has called "height psychology" and also constitutes much of what Maslow has referred to in his studies on peak experiences.³⁹

The super conscious is extremely important for harmonizing the conflicting forces which operate among men. Assagioli notes that the psychological life of a nation corresponds to a great extent to that which is *unconscious* in individuals. Modern investigation of unconscious psychological activities has ascertained that these activities are chiefly instinctive, emotional and imaginative. They are easily influenced by suggestion and often dominated by the collective unconscious, directed by ancestral "images" or archetypes, as Jung calls them. A genuine and unbiased observation of the psychological life of all people demonstrates that it is dominated by the same characteristics. In addition, the true spiritual center is, in both nations and individuals, super conscious. It does exist, at a level that is ordinarily above the reach of personal consciousness.⁴⁰ The distinction between the eruption of forces from the lower unconscious and

³⁹ Abraham Maslow, "New Introduction: Religion, Values and Peak Experiences," *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, II:2 (1970), 89.

⁴⁰ Roberto Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis: Individual and Social* (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 1965), p. 7.

super conscious is extremely important. Because when higher symbols are focused upon and maximized, they intend to lift and harmonize the conflicting and sometimes destructive primitive energies which are erupting.

The elements and functions coming from the super conscious such as aesthetic, ethical, religious experiences, intuition, inspiration, and states of mystical consciousness, are *factual*, in a pragmatic sense. The German word *Wirlich* means *effective*, producing changes both in the inner and outer world. Psychosynthesis does not attempt to develop a metaphysical or philosophical explanation of this phenomenon. This view of the super conscious is a scientific conception and is thus neutral towards religious forms and doctrines. With Abraham Maslow, psychosynthesis views these super conscious states as phenomenon amenable to observation and experiment. It also notes, along with the theories and findings of transpersonal psychology, that these symbols and accompanying energies of the super conscious may be influenced and utilized or evoked through psycho-spiritual techniques.

While the super conscious partakes to a large degree in the characteristics of the unconscious as a whole, it is to be distinguished from the lower unconscious first of all in terms of energy. "Viewed in terms of energy one may consider the contents of the super conscious as energies having higher frequency than some of the contents from the lower unconscious."⁴¹ The difference, and it is very real, consists

⁴¹ Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis, A Manual*, p. 198.

in what is specific to the super conscious in terms of certain values. These values are outlined most fully in an article entitled *Symbols of Transpersonal Experience*.⁴² Assagioli groups these symbols of human values into 14 categories:

1. Introversion
2. Deepening--descent
3. Elevation--ascent
4. Broadening--expansion
5. Awakening
6. Light-illumination
7. Fire
8. Development
9. Strengthening--intensification
10. Love
11. Way--path--pilgrimage
12. Transmutation--sublimation
13. Rebirth--regeneration
14. Liberation

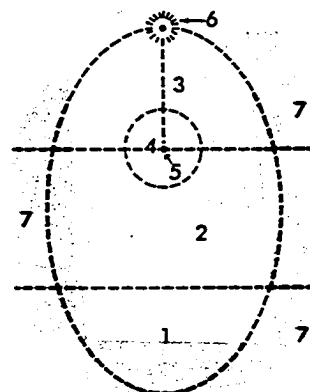
Each category involves a state of being capable of symbolic representation, the specific symbols of which are found in the collective experience of mankind and the unconscious of each individual. Techniques for evoking these transpersonal experiences include the "waking daydream," and exercises of concentration, which will be discussed at length under "Methods."

Modes of Experiencing the Super Conscious. Assagioli divides his discussion of the experience of the super conscious into two main sections: First a study of spontaneous experiences of the super conscious in which two types of geniuses are discussed. Second: the types of super conscious experiences which can be evoked by meditation

⁴²Assagioli, *Symbols of Transpersonal Experience*, p. 4.

upon certain symbols. The first type of genius is depicted by the following diagram.⁴³

1. Lower unconscious
2. Middle unconscious
3. Higher unconscious or super conscious
4. Field of consciousness
5. Conscious self or I
6. Higher Self
7. Collective unconscious



This first diagram indicates that there is a certain degree of elevation of the conscious personal center, which is reached the phenomenal border line between conscious and super conscious, and the field of consciousness has been widely enlarged into the super conscious level. This is not an absolutely stable constant condition, but it is fairly stable about to the same degree to which the normal consciousness of the average man can be called stable.

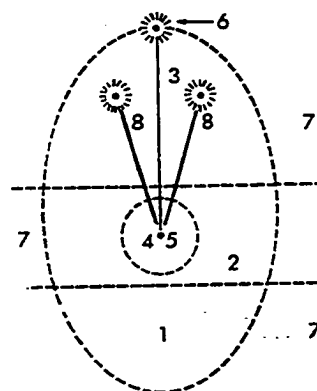
To this class belong the great universal geniuses who have an all around expansive self-realization, who have given a demonstration of their creative activities in various fields. Pythagoras, Plato, Dante, Leonardo De Vinci, and Einstein are outstanding examples. In addition to being gifted they are in a more or less permanent way well adjusted in all areas of their lives.

To the second class of geniuses belong men who, though extraordinarily gifted in one direction, have personalities which are either average or in many cases maladjusted with regard to the norm

⁴³ Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis, A Manual*, p. 200.

for maturity. An outstanding example of this group is Mozart who composed music throughout his short life while candidly admitting he did not know where this music came from or how it was composed. This process can be described as descent, entrance and pervasion for occupation of a field of consciousness by the products of psychological functions active at a level outside and above that of the normal conscious personality. This class is represented by the following diagram.⁴⁴

1. Lower unconscious
2. Middle unconscious
3. Higher unconscious or super conscious
4. Field of consciousness
5. Conscious self or I
6. Higher self
7. Collective unconscious
8. Contents of super conscious



A third type of super conscious experience stems from strenuous inner exercise of prayer or meditation in which the personal I is projected upwards towards the level of the super conscious, getting at times very near to the spiritual self. This also occurs during the intense focusing of abstract thought that mathematicians, or physicists occasionally experience and at these moments they often get real intuitive flashes of understanding which they then translate into understandable mathematical terms. Aesthetic experiences at their pitch sometimes give a similar ecstasy of super conscious realization.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 201.

Similarly occasionally moments of danger instead of paralyzing men with fear, draw them to heroic action. This has been described as "enhancement of being," a real super conscious experience for a short spell in which the situation lasts. All of these foregoing experiences, are, however, relatively brief, and after the experience the consciousness of the person relaxes to its normal level.

Evocation of the Super Conscious. A principle of psychosynthesis which has great importance for the practical outworking of psychosynthetic technique is the notion that the super conscious may be evoked through certain meditative approaches related to fixed symbols or personalized representations of the spiritual self, or meditations concerning the accounts in spiritual literature. This process will be discussed more fully under the section of Methods. I note here that these techniques of evoking the energies of the super conscious are very important for the transmutation and sublimation of sexual energies, aggressive drives and further harmonization of the entire personality.

An example of this phenomenon may be seen in the "feeding technique" utilized by Dr. Hanscarl Leuner, in his approach to handling frightening intrapsychic images.⁴⁵ When in the process of experiencing a directed day dream, the patient encounters a frightening image such as a giant, the therapist suggests the presence of a huge quantity of

⁴⁵Hanscarl Leuner, "Guided Affective Imagery, Method of Intensive Psychotherapy," *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, XXII:1 (January 1969), 17.

food near at hand which he directs the patient to feed to the giant. What typically happens is the giant loses his aggressiveness, becomes drowsy, lies down, and goes to sleep. Dr. Frank Haronian notes that this act has profound ethical implications. "Ergo, the dichotomy of egotism verses altruism is transcended by an imaginary and symbolic act, namely, feeding. . . . It would appear that Leuner has come upon a psychologically sound rationale for such Biblical injunctions as:

1. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
2. Judge not, that you not be judged.
3. Love your neighbor as yourself.
4. Turn the other cheek.
5. Love your enemies."⁴⁶

Understanding of the ethical as being basic to humanity, rather than derived from the sexual and aggressive drives by processes of reaction--formation, projection, and sublimation, (the explanation given in the orthodox psychoanalytic literature) is evidenced in the writings of Dr. Robert Gerard, current president of the Psychosynthesis Research Foundation.

It is true that in many cases spiritual strivings are derived from other drives; for example some individuals may project the image of a God, because of their own immature need for dependency on a strong father image. There is this remnant in many of us, I'm sure, but there is also something else. There is a spiritual urge which is not derived from infantilism, from dependency, from reaction formation to aggression; which is not derived from a sexual drive; but which is a drive in itself, just as much as a sexual and aggressive drives. As individuals develop in adolescence and express more of the sexual drive, in the same way, generally later in life, the

⁴⁶ Frank Haronian, Ph.D., "The Ethical Relevance of a Psychotherapeutic Technique," *Journal of Religion and Health*, VI:2 (April 1967), 3-5.

person starts to express some of his spiritual drives. Viewed in this light neurosis can occur just as much from the repression of sexual and aggressive drives. I think this is a very important distinction between orthodox psychoanalysis and the view of psychosynthesis.⁴⁷

Thus far I have described Psychosynthesis as having its roots in dynamic psychology, incorporating many of the understandings and techniques of Gestalt therapy, and as having a distinct emphasis upon the concept of the self, both the personal self or "I" and the higher Self; as having an emphasis on the will; and as holding to a well defined concept of the super conscious. I now turn to an analysis of the mythic structure of existence inherent in Psychosynthesis.

⁴⁷Robert Gerard, *Psychosynthesis: A Psychotherapy for the Whole Man* (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 1964), p. 5.

CHAPTER II

MYTHIC STRUCTURES OF EXISTENCE IN PSYCHOSYNTHESIS AND CHRISTIANITY

When one speaks about a "nature" of man, one uses language which, in a very technical sense, may be called mythological. When one speaks about ultimate values, the nature of the cosmos, the origin and destiny of man, or about God, the same mythological language may be used.

This sort of speech has the very special task of translating inner, intrapsychic experiences, (which may fall into the category of revelation, illumination or insight) into terms which are understandable in language which makes "sense," that is, that can be grasped by the senses.

So mythological language stands as a bridge between the physical and trans-physical, material and spiritual, realms of human experience. Myths, of course, vary widely in their basic values and presuppositions communicated by their symbols as well as the implications that may be drawn from them. It seems to me that by careful examination of the statements and teachings of various schools of both ancient and contemporary thought, their presuppositions may be discerned and cast in the language of comparative mythology thus revealing key concepts which form basic watersheds for streams of methodology.

In the case of both psychology and religion, the use of this

phenomenological approach is well known. Since there is a trend toward reflection concerning basic values in the world today, it seems appropriate to examine both Psychosynthesis and Christianity in the light of their respective myths to see what Psychosynthesis might offer to pastoral counseling.

In erecting this conceptual bridge between Christianity and Psychosynthesis I shall begin by discussing the phenomenon of myth and myth making in the history of man: The recurring and universal themes of darkness and light will be discussed as a basis for comparing various myths; the possible stances of the psyche towards this imagery will be discussed; and in the light of these findings Christianity and Psychosynthesis will be compared to each other and to other contemporary philosophies and psychologies. Finally the implications for counseling will be discussed.

Although the task is elaborate, it is felt that once the ground work is laid, a very clear comparison of various schools of thought can be made.

THE PHENOMENON OF MYTH MAKING

Myth is generally recognized as the language of the ancients, less widely recognized as a daily function of modern man. In order to convey an understanding of this concept, a short survey of the various ways in which man has regarded myth is in order.

Archaic or "Primitive" Man

Mircea Eliade indicates that for archaic man, "reality is a

function of the imitation of a celestial archetype."¹ The sense of the meaning is that of a pattern in heaven which the citizens of earth must participatively copy in order to take on significance. Reality is in fact discovered only in such acts, deeds, and places which participate in the archetype. This reality is conferred by rituals and gestures which repeat the original acts of gods, heroes, and ancestors.

In the language of John Cobb, this state of affairs represents a "primitive existence" in which the center of existence is located in the unconscious.²

Here Cobb follows Jung, who understood archetypes to be contents of the unconscious projected on the cosmos unconsciously, and then related to as though they were exterior phenomena.³

Axial Man

In the "axial" structure of existence, in which most civilized men participate, the intrapsychic relationship is quite different. During the axial period, beginning the middle part of the millennium before Christ,

. . . The reflective consciousness, through thousands of years of civilization became increasingly rational in widening areas.
. . . Finally, men appeared who, from the standpoint of this

¹ Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), p. 5.

² John B. Cobb, Jr., *The Structure of Christian Existence* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), p. 35.

³ C. G. Jung, *Two Essays in Analytic Psychology* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1928), p. 106.

strengthened rationality, could effectively destroy the power of the mythical world, not only for themselves, but for many others as well. This drastic break with the mythic age constituted the axial period.⁴

This destruction of the archaic mythical world was accomplished in a number of ways which Cobb discusses at length. The point I wish to make at this juncture is that a radical shift towards a more conscious and reflective attitude to the archetype took place. If we may believe Jung, the archetypal symbols of the unconscious were in no way lost in this process of axialization, only repressed from consciousness.

Contemporary Man

Having emerged into axial existence, modern man is now faced with a rediscovery of myth. As consciousness becomes heightened and more expansive, new inner archetypal experiences are occurring. The twentieth century emphasis on the inwardness of man has many causes which cannot be dealt with here. At any rate, myth is being rediscovered. In speaking of myth, Morton Kelsey notes,

Man, according to this point of view, is in contact with two worlds, a physical one and a non-physical one. In other words, a material world and one which for a lack of a better name, is called a psychic or a non-physical realm. Man comes into direct, immediate contact with both of these realms of reality. And he discovers the second, inner realm not by thinking, but by experience. . . . The language which men use to describe the encounter with this realm is that of mythology.

⁴Cobb, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

Mythology gives us non-physical reality, just as the symbols and formula of chemistry help us to work with physical elements.⁵

It is important to realize that the signification or language of mythology is not the reality itself. The reality is rather experienced more directly. Myth is simply the signification of that experience.

Kelsey goes on to say:

What mythology is, is a kind of communication. Its symbols, images and stories convey descriptions of psychic or non-physical reality which neither sense, experience or rational concepts can convey, and which, therefore make a profound impression upon both the originator and hearer of the myth. Real myth has a spontaneous quality about it which strikes deep and profoundly into the psyche which is open to it, and can usually be distinguished from an allegory which is consciously contrived, by this spontaneous and profound quality.

It will be noted that there is nothing in this definition of myth to separate it from history. Myth is not the opposite of history; it is merely different from history. In fact, there is nothing in the nature of myth which confines it to man's imagination alone or keeps it from being embodied in outer events. It is logical and quite possible for myths to be expressed in history; the same reality which breaks forth in the images and stories of man's inner life can also be expressed in the stories of historical events as being both historical and mythological.⁶

Suzanne Langer points out that the triumph of empiricism in science is jeopardized by the surprising truth that our sense-data are primarily symbols.⁷ She further notes that the process of symbol using

⁵Morton Kelsey, *The Mythology of Evil* (Monrovia, CA: Privately published by St. Luke's Press, 1964), p. 2.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁷Suzanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key* (New York: New American Library, 1951), p. 29.

and symbol reading has proceeded along two widely divergent lines. They are that of modern psychology and modern logic.⁸

It seems to me that symbolic logic and mathematics fall into the category of what Kelsey would call allegory. It is consciously contrived, intellectual, representing a concept which may be reasonably and rationally followed through life. Psychosynthesis on the other hand corresponds more closely to what Kelsey would call true myth. It presupposes a subjective involvement, and strikes deeply and profoundly into the psyche which is open to it. It involves the total being of man, and addresses itself to questions of deep concern. Also religions in general and Christianity in particular fall into this category of myth.

The notion of myth which I have just described may be used to analyze the unconsciously held world views of modern men. We can sense the importance of understanding the myths to which men adhere by focusing in on the conference table of a peace conference. The peace negotiators struggle with the "spirit of darkness" within the historical context of our day. The inner "myth" of the negotiators will soon become the history of the world. The past history of the world has already become internalized as the myth of the negotiators. An impasse is reached when the world is without mythic resources to imagine solutions to its immense problems of self preservation and self destruction.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 30.

MYTHS OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS

Since time immemorial the categories of darkness and light have been related to good and evil as it has been encountered in the inner and outer environment of man. The categories of good and evil, long out of fashion, are coming back into style. If the philosophical task of delineating the difference is abstruse, the necessity of discerning between good and evil in a crisis situation is nonetheless imperative. Beginning with the being of man, we may be confident in calling those aspects of his existence which sustain his life and which point to the creative development of it, as good. Those aspects which destroy life, or hinder and disrupt man in his efforts to fulfill his existence may be called evil. Although this far from exhausts the topic this definition will serve as a point of departure for our further discussion.

It seems to me that there are three different ways of looking at the structure of reality with regard to good and evil. First, we could look upon life as a series of random events without connectedness or meaning. Therefore, there would be no relationship between events that are good or evil. Secondly, we could look upon good and evil as arbitrary categories relating only to man, while the universe is seen as morally indifferent. The third point of view sees ultimate reality consisting of a creative upbuilding power. There is also another power which is responsible for the manifestations of evil in the universe. Neither of these powers happen by accident, and both are realities with which man has direct contact. This is the view of all the major religions of the world. Within this third "religious" way of

looking at good and evil there are further two different views of how good and evil are related to each other. The polar view, common to Eastern religions, sees evil as a necessary corollary of good, and equally ultimate to it. The view which Christianity has been identified with, sees good as being ultimate, while evil has a derivative character, and can do nothing creative of itself. Hence good is looked upon as being more real than evil.

To put it mythically, light is more real than darkness.

Before going further let me hasten to point out that the connection between good and light, and darkness and evil, is by no means absolute. There are not only many human experiences, but also a number of mythologies which represent darkness as being positive and comforting, and light as being harsh and destructive.

Nevertheless it is safe to say that there is a *general* relationship between good and light and darkness and evil. I feel that this general relationship stems from the intimate connection between light and consciousness on the one hand, and darkness and unconsciousness on the other. Martin Buber in his dealing with the problem of good and evil speaks in terms of direction and purpose towards God. The question of good and ungood is not whether one has a good or ungood disposition but if one is *disposed toward good* or whether that disposition toward good is absent. "Not until we deal with this second state, with the lack of direction toward God, do we penetrate to the chamber of the soul at whose entrance we encounter the demon."⁹ Buber then

⁹Martin Buber, *Good and Evil* (New York: Charles Scribner's

discusses the Biblical account of the slaying of Abel. "In contradistinction to the first humans, Cain does not reply to God's address, he refuses to account to Him for this deed. He refuses to face the demon at the threshold; he thus delivers himself up to the latter's 'desire.' *Intensification and confirmation of this indecision is decision to evil.*" (Italics mine)

It seems to me that the Bible does not present man as making a radical decision towards evil. Indeed in a later section in discussing the dualistic Zarathustrian doctrine of evil, Buber says this specifically. Evil as visualized in the Biblical account consists of a slipping, sliding, procrastinating, indecisive lapse into darkness. *When man becomes evil, he becomes unconscious.* He ignores the demon at the door.

This unconsciousness is not the same as the state of innocence which was a state of God consciousness. Buber equates that consciousness with a human lack of awareness of the polarities inherent in all being within the world,¹⁰ *but it was still consciousness.*

The awareness of opposites attained in the account of picking the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, places a man in a position of trying to encompass opposites while at the same time being denied the superior-familiar relationship which God enjoys. But there is no indication that this event is determinative in a causal

Sons, 1953), p. 88.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 74.

sense. The next step, represented in the story of Cain and Abel, symbolizes an encounter of Cain with his own inner polarities which he chooses to ignore. He falls into unconsciousness.

From the standpoint of this understanding, darkness and evil are related to a willful unconsciousness of one's own inner opposites. Light and goodness are related to consciousness (the attaining of which of course entails the facing of the demon at the threshold) and which impels us God-ward.

It is important to note that in this mythic frame of reference, light is seen as both original and ultimate. Consciousness is seen as a hall-mark of humanity prior to the "Fall." The fall is *rather the specific consciousness of opposites that poses man with the concept of dread*, beyond which he must press Godward, toward further consciousness in order to survive as Man. Darkness is in a situational and secondary relationship to the light. Whatever explanations have been offered to explicate man's existence, and his existential situation, this order of affairs, light--darkness--light has been preserved throughout the history of Israel and the Christian faith as descriptive of the nature of existence.

I cannot place too much emphasis upon this understanding. It will be normative for all I say in my analysis of psychology and religion. Here are some reasons for my concern with this issue.

First, it is most important to affirm one's origins in consciousness, or light, or "good," because that affirmation will turn out to be where one's destiny lies.

In mythic utterances, in commitment to values, in transpersonal involvements, one seems to always wind up where one begins. The Alpha and the Omega turn out to be the same thing.

In his analysis of life positions, Dr. Thomas Harris notes there are three possible "not o.k." ego states which are destructive, and one possible creative "o.k." ego state in which one decides actively to return to a very early state of existence prior to a "not o.k. decision" made somewhat later, yet still in early childhood. This enables the person to move forward in an o.k. direction.¹¹

All four positions, however, are holistic. I'm not o.k.--you're o.k. I'm not o.k.--you're not o.k. I'm o.k.--you're not o.k.--all three *really* mean--a negative life denying stance towards self. I'm o.k.--you're o.k. is just as life affirming in the opposite direction.

The same phenomenon may be found in theological and psychological theorizing.

Early decisions regarding the origins of existence are decisive for every step there after. In this connection, Paul Tillich notes, in discussing the effect of Greek and Christian humanism upon our contemporary views.

The decisive difference between both types of humanism is the answer to the question whether being is essentially good or not. While the symbol of creation implies the classical Christian doctrine that 'being as being is good' the doctrine

¹¹Thomas A. Harris, *I'm O.K.--You're O.K.* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 43.

of the 'resisting matter' in Greek philosophy expresses the pagan feeling that being is necessarily ambiguous insofar as it participates in both creative form and inhibiting matter. This contrast in the basic ontological conception has decisive consequences. . . .¹²

To this point I have established the importance of myth for modern man, described it as a signification, a road map of man's inner experience, and forwarded the mental images of light and darkness as being valid categories for use in evaluating comparative myths with regard to their pronouncements about the nature of man.

It is now important to add to the discussion of mythic imagery another element. That is the intrapsychic structure of existence inherent in a given myth. Another way of saying this is by asking the question, "what stance does the psyche take towards its inner experience?" This topic has been briefly discussed already in describing archaic, axial and contemporary man. But it is now necessary to discuss the subject more fully.

THE STRUCTURE OF EXISTENCE

The method I shall follow in this section is based on the work of Dr. John Cobb,¹³ in an article entitled, *The Intrapsychic Structure of Christian Existence*. A notion basic to this work is that the distinctiveness of Christianity can be studied by an analysis of its *mode of existence*. Modes of existence may be thought of as being reflected

¹²Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 18, 19.

¹³John B. Cobb, Jr., "The Intrapsychic Structure of Christian Existence," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, XXXVI:4

in both the ethical teachings and mythical proclamations, including credal affirmations and principles regarding the nature of man and the cosmos. By analyzing the former, comparative modes of existence may be discovered and expressed in terminology common to several religions.

Since the science of psychology has in common with religion the task of building a system of thought upon unproven assumptions (mythical statements) it seems appropriate to me to use this method in analyzing Psychosynthesis as well. Suzanne Langer (quoting Whitehead) points out that it is not, after all, the intellectual positions of philosophers, but rather their assumptions, which need to be attended to. For these assumptions form the "horizon," the limit of clear and sensible questions that we can ask.¹⁴ The assumptions or presuppositions of any given religion or psychology form the horizon of questions that can be asked, the limit of possibilities open to man.

In this analysis, I begin with John Cobb in thinking of the existence of Man in terms of five dimensions: the body, the emotions, the reason, the will, and spirit.¹⁵ These categories are not thought to be exhaustive but a schematic aid. They are seen as being in some way independent from one another in other ways mutually interdependent. Wholeness stems from a center (the self) located in one of these foundational levels, from which the totality of the psychic life is

(December 1968), 327-339.

¹⁴Langer, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

¹⁵Cobb, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

organized and unified. The following is an abstraction from Dr. Cobb's description of the above categories.¹⁶

The Body and The Emotions

Every experience has both a subjective and objective element. The body, that which can be seen and touched and otherwise investigated by the physiologists, may be defined as providing the objective element of our experience. The body sees, feels pain, is aware of memories. But these objective aspects of my experience are always accompanied by subjective ones. Emotion is this subjective side of the polarity that characterizes all experience. So understood, emotion has an intimate relation to bodily function. In addition to stressing the intimate interdependence of bodily and emotional functioning, it is necessary to indicate how independent they can sometimes be. We all know persons of good physical health who have serious emotional problems, and we all know persons with serious physical handicaps and limitations who have nevertheless achieved a remarkable degree of emotional health.

Reason

By reason is meant a kind of activity that presupposes an openness to the forms given in the objective pole of experience in some measure of independence from their primary emotional impact. Once these forms are distanced in this sense, their mutual relations can be

¹⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 329-32.

examined. This makes possible contemplation, analysis, classification, generalization, and speculation. Whereas in recent times we have been taught to stress the unity of bodily and emotional life, we have learned to sense the *tensions* between healthy emotions and a major emphasis upon reason. Nevertheless, we should not understand the goals of emotional health and rational excellence primarily in their opposition to each other. Emotional health must be defined in part in terms of the "reality principle," the capacity of individuals to accept and adjust to the reality known by reason.

Will

The will is the concept questioned by many thinkers who feel that the interaction of emotion and reason can adequately explain the human phenomenon. Nevertheless the existence of the will is pointed to by moments in our lives when reflection and emotional tensions centering around uncertainty are resolved into definiteness of purpose, and in these moments it does not seem to be the emotions and thoughts alone that precipitate the resolution. The will is called into being by just such problematic or decisional situations. It has no inherent character comparable to that of emotion or reason but it exists as a transcendence of these factors--as the determinate of behavior wherever the behavior is problematic. Although there is an intimate relationship between the will, the emotions, and reason, there are many instances where any one of these three is strongly developed and the other two are atrophied. The correlation of emotional health and

rationality and the development of the will is a positive one, but far from total.

The Self

Another term, the self is now needed to continue the discussion. The self is that center from which the totality of the psychic life is organized and unified. The locus of the self may be in the emotion, reason, or will. However it is possible that the self so transcends itself that it freely determines its own locus. Where this occurs, there emerges an additional aspect of human existence which will be called "spirit."

Spirit

Spirit is self-transcending selfhood. Self-transcendence here refers primarily to an intrapsychic phenomenon, the capacity to distance or objectify and act upon or influence. All responsibility depends on transcendence in this sense. The full, complete reflexivity of self-transcendence that is spirit involves a new order of responsibility. As spirit, a man is not responsible only for his action but more fundamentally for the locus of the self that acts. He is free as self to identify himself with emotion, reason or will. As long as he remains free to alter this self identification he remains spirit. The spirit retains its purity and full freedom as spirit only when it avoids identification with other aspects of existence and, instead identifies itself with itself as spirit.

Although spiritual existence places the self in the ultimate position of transcendence, and therefore offers the ultimate in possibility for integration and wholeness of the entire organism, strength and health of spirit do not guarantee strength and health in any of the other levels. In all of these relations, we find again the pattern of mutual interdependence combined with a measure of independence.

Cobb defines strength of spirit as the degree to which spirit maintains itself in its transcendence of the other aspects of existence and succeeds in subordinating the whole psychic life to itself. He further defines health of spirit as genuine concern for others as opposed to preoccupation with the self. He then affirms that spiritual existence is the structure of Christian existence, and allows that spiritual existence is not limited to Christianity.

CHRISTIANITY AND MYTHIC STRUCTURES OF EXISTENCE

In order to bring together the ideas I have been talking about, I shall discuss Christian existence beginning with the emergence of Israel from an archaic structure of existence into "Personal existence" in which the locus of the Self is in the will. As Cobb noted, the issue was obedience, the yes or no of the will. The key occasion for this is cited by Eliade as the account of God's command to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.

Abraham's religious act in offering Isaac inaugurates a new religious dimension: God reveals Himself as personal, as a 'totally distinct' existence that ordains, bestows,

demands, without any rational (i.e. general and foreseeable) justification, and for which all is possible. This new religious dimension renders 'faith' possible in the Judeo-Christian sense.¹⁷

There are two key phrases in the above statement: one is "person," the other "faith." Although the concept of "person" is very hard to define, the following quote is suggestive of its meaning and very similar to the notion of "Self."

It is presupposed within the complexity of the conscious life of the soul, a multiplicity of conflicting forces. But the seat of existence from which these forces were viewed, and in some measure objectified, would not be identified with any of them. It was, rather a center of being in each new situation concretely responsible for the soul's total response. This transcendent, responsible center is the 'personal I,' and with its emergence every other element within the soul comes to play a different part.¹⁸

Here, intrapsychically, the "personal I" seems to operate obediently toward the Higher Self or an archetype that also bears the marks of the personal I. This is the phenomenon occasioning the emergence of Israel out of mythic existence. It may be seen as highly developed in Buber's concept of the "I-Thou" relationship.¹⁹

The second word, "faith," introduces a new state of affairs. It implies that the "personal I" is able to reflect on the contents of archetypes and to attribute levels of significance and meaning to them. In Israel, the way out of a mythical and circular structure of

¹⁷Eliade, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

¹⁸Cobb, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

¹⁹Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 79.

existence into an axial and linear structure of existence, is by way of a relationship of ultimate concern between the "personal I" and the higher Self or its archetypical correlate. Here the notion of obedience to the "Thou" is critical and, as Cobb points out, results in identification of the Self with the will.

Tillich notes that, "The fundamental symbol of our ultimate concern is God." With Tillich's specific understanding of what a symbol is, I can agree with this sentence as being non-definitively true. The symbol points to a reality beyond itself and participates in that reality, but never circumscribes or limits that reality. This understanding leads us back to Langer's assertion that our sense data are primarily symbols, and begins to locate Judaism within the framework of her thought.

One might say, the "Personal I" relates to the inner symbols of the "Personal I" in terms of ultimate concern.

Remembering that the "I" has qualities of responsibility and, above all, consciousness, I relate the image of light to the "I" and to its symbolic correlates.

Light and consciousness have been related to one another often in the myths of the world. But in the case of the Hebrew-Christian religion, the added dimension of "ultimate concern" appears.

Light becomes more than the destiny of man and the cosmos. *It is also the source.* This is of utmost seriousness for any world view associated with bringing to consciousness the hidden stirrings of the human organism because it widens immensely the horizons of possibility,

and, more importantly, opens immense reservoirs of symbol-borne psychic energy, that are unavailable apart from such evocative mental imagery.

To identify the "I" with light in the consciousness of believers is to ring the earth with light, to give coherence to the depths of man, to question implicitly the power of womb and tomb, and to enable men to face "the demon crouching at the door."

In the last analysis, the Old Testament doctrine of creation expresses a sense of the present situation of man. He is hedged in by the incomprehensible power of Almighty God. The real purpose of the creation story is to inculcate what God is doing all the time. As he once created man, so he is continually forming him in his mother's womb (Ps. 139:13). As he once gave him the breath of life, so he imparts it again and again (Job, 33:4). If he withdraws that breath, man returns to the dust from which he sprang. And when God restores that breath, he rises again and God renews the face of the earth (Ps. 104:29).²⁰

As he turns to describe the gnostic view of light and darkness, Bultmann notes a great difference: "If these elements of light were removed, this artificial world of ours, the cosmos, would return to its primordial state of chaos."²¹

Because mythic affirmations are seen as self images projected upon the universe, these statements about the cosmos, and God, can be taken to be statements about the nature of man. For the Hebrews the origin, present state and destiny of man can be seen as follows:

Light-----> Darkness-----> Light
For the gnostics it would be
Darkness---> Light-----> Darkness

²⁰ Rudolph Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity* (Cleveland: World, 1962), p. 18.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

The spiritual existence of Christianity developed out of cosmic imagery of Judaism. As Cobb says, it goes beyond self identification with the will as in the case of Judaism, and identifies the self in its infinite capacity for self transcendence.

While there is a wonderful liberty attached to this experience, both the degree of self-transcendence of spirit (strength of spirit) and genuine concern for others (health of spirit) are dependent upon powerful sources of psychic energy which, I maintain, are connected to symbolic, mythic representation.

For instance, take the case of loving one's enemies, a commandment of Christ that bears existentially almost daily upon today's shrinking planet.

In the darkness---> light model, what we are conscious of comprises the sum total of our resources. The unknown can only be an enemy.

With the light---> dark---> light model, consciousness comprises only a small part of our total resources. What we don't know may very possibly turn out to be helpful.

Thus, hope and love, the *sine qua non*s for the tremendous task of self transcending self, are activated by the mythic representations of light and the concomitant energy released.

Although Cobb does not list this as a reason that Christian existence cannot flourish apart from belief in and worship of God as he is known in Jesus, I believe it is a most powerful one.

The mythic representations of Christian existence then, may be

described as follows. Man's origins are in Light. His present state in darkness, though actual, is not a radical, "root" condition. His destiny is to fulfill his origins by the structure of infinite self-transcendence, in which he is supported from his depths, as well as called forth toward, light beyond.

PSYCHOSYNTHESIS AND MYTHIC STRUCTURES OF EXISTENCE

The key concept in the myth of Psychosynthesis is the self, the center of pure consciousness. Assagioli takes great pains to make it clear that this Self is not a psychological construct, or an emerging, developing entity, but a *causative given*. Though not always manifested, it is still active and effective, and contact with Self is continuous. *Consciousness* of Self is theoretically possible at any age or state, and issues in an enhanced state of existence.

Because the Self is seen as an originating influence, the origins of man are (as in the case of Christianity) ringed in light. The "dark night of the soul" is not seen as overwhelming, because it speaks of a symbolically intermediate, rather than an ultimate, state. As with Christianity the central myth of Psychosynthesis is:

Light--> Darkness--> Light.

As in Christianity, the ultimate depth of humanity is imagined to be conscious, willing, and affirmative of the organism as a whole.

Psychosynthesis holds a spiritual structure of existence. The self is systematically dis-identified with the body, emotions, reason, desire, imagination, and will. It objectifies all, save its own

consciousness of consciousness, and affirms its freedom to transcend itself in choosing its locus of identification.

There are obviously a great many similarities between the mythic structures of existence in Psychosynthesis and Christianity. One of the differences I note is as follows.

While attaching value to the higher Self, and speaking in language reminiscent of mystical experiences of God, the note of responsive obedience to an either-or, or a radical imperative toward loving others is missing in Psychosynthesis. The note of ultimate concern is replaced by a more Taoistic tone. Psychosynthesis does not, of course, pretend to be a religion, and such a stance would be misplaced.

Interestingly enough, the notion of a God who acts in the lives of his people might be contained in Psychosynthesis. Much of the focus is upon psycho-spiritual disciplines in which the personal I strives to rise up toward the higher Self (which remains motionless while projecting its influences) after the fashion of Eastern concepts of God and spirituality. But there is also the activity of the super conscious invading the consciousness of the person, calling, bearing the Word, etc. As in Christian existence, the response to this call hopefully results in identification of self with Self in the infinite freedom of transcendence.

Cobb speaks of "health of spirit" in terms of concern for others as opposed to preoccupation with self. Psychosynthesis holds that the inner experience is not an end but a means to a deeper, more

dynamic and effective involvement with, and service to, humanity.²²

The importance of self contacting Self and cooperating with the will of the higher Self is stressed in Assagioli's *The Training of the Will*, and *Psychosynthesis, Individual and Social*.

So, as in Christianity, spiritual existence is employed to evoke the light in others.

MYTHIC STRUCTURES OF EXISTENCE IN OTHER PSYCHOLOGIES AND PHILOSOPHIES

Although no definitive discussion can be attempted at this time, it will be helpful to say a few words about the way other thought forms seem to compare with Psychosynthesis. Using the canons established earlier in the chapter, the scene appears as follows.

Analytic Psychology

Assagioli regards the Jungian view of personality as the closest to his own. Looking at the Self as fully individuated, the structure of existence may certainly be described as "self identified with self," or spiritual existence.

With regard to the myth of origins, a good deal of ambiguity is encountered. Jung spoke widely concerning various mythologies of creation, usually as an empiricist. He seems to have remained agnostic with regard to this subject, much as Assagioli regards him as being

²²Roberto Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis: Individual and Social* (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 1965), p. 207.

agnostic towards the Self.

The mythic representation in terms of light may be characterized as:

Ambiguity ---> Darkness ---> Light or Ambiguity

Jung was one of the most positive early psychologists regarding the nature of man. Yet, I have often wondered if this ambiguity has been the cause of the perennial symbolic quest in Jungian Psychotherapy which is so slow to challenge the outer world in a reality testing way.

Gestalt Therapy

Gestalt therapy also seems to hold a positive view toward the possibility of spiritual existence, although not so clear cut, nor fully developed as in Psychosynthesis. The identification of the self with the self in choosing its locus is strongly supported by the notion of holism.

Perls seems to have made a decisive break with both psychoanalysis and other forms of ego-psychology by his holistic doctrine of the "ego as a function of the organism."²³ Here he opposes the psychoanalytic doctrine of the ego as substance, bounded and defended from the id, and affirms the ego as rather the boundary itself according to an identification--alienation function. This opens the egoic

²³F. S. Perls, *Ego, Hunger and Aggression* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), p. 138.

process to relationship with the whole unconscious, rendering the unconscious much more friendly and life affirming. This idea, plus his notion of ubiquitous positive inner thrust toward life moves Gestalt Therapy strongly toward a more positive view.

The idea of origin in light is one which Perls seemed to be tending toward. He indicates this by his interest in Whitehead's ideas of a conscious universe. So, while he does not seem to be as clear and firm in this as Assagioli is, I would characterize the view of Gestalt Therapy as

Light---> Darkness---> Light

Existential Psychology

Existential Psychology is far too variable a subject to generalize about. It usually provides for spiritual existence, but the supporting mythic symbolization varies. Often, the absence of light is marked, as in the case of Sartre. (One can see the importance of Assagioli's view of the higher Self for supplying the sense of universality, thus making love possible between selves.) On the other hand many existentialist therapies, among them Logotherapy and Gestalt Therapy, hold a view of origins in light.

Psychoanalysis

Freud was of course, heavily influenced by the models of reality of his day, including positivism, evolution, and Newtonian physics. Following psychoanalytic theory strictly, with, for example,

the notion of an ego evolving from a mindless and dangerous id, the model appears

Darkness--> Light--> Darkness

Much of ego psychology has been unsuccessful in escaping this model, despite the fact that it focuses on apparently conscious processes. Consciousness is in jeopardy at all times and must defend itself against its origins.

Theoretically, the identification of the self seems to be with the body-emotion complex or the drives. Freud of course appealed to reason and will in his therapy, but made little of it theoretically.

Some Concepts of Christianity

Some Christian sects, and much of folk-Christianity has peddled a "Good God--Bad Man" myth. This actually turns out to be a Bad God myth. The moment man's sinfulness is presented as innate (the popular distortion of original sin), it becomes the deepest truth about men. No pronouncements about God's grace can prevent a mistrust in the God whose image is inextricably bound with ours in the depths of our own imagination. The model here is

Darkness----> Light----> Darkness.

The self seems to be identified negatively in the will.

The Prevalent View of Evolution

For most people, the model of evolution presents man emerging from the darkness of primordial seas, from the darkness of unconscious,

archaic existence, into the light of personhood, rationality, and consciousness. The model is

Darkness---> Light---> Darkness

The locus of the self seems to be quite variable, with axial existence normative. Personal and spiritual existence are not inherent in the system.

Erwin Singer in *Key Concepts in Psychotherapy* concerns himself with this whole issue of myths of human depth in psychotherapy.²⁴

He notes that most theorists agree that the result of man's acceptance of his inherent freedom (however limited that freedom may be) is emotional well-being. Self-enslavement by refusing to accept this freedom is psychopathology. While most schools of thought agree on this basic premise, they differ on what man would know if he only exercised this freedom.

Broadly, the two main positions may be referred to as a "tension reduction" or "regression hypothesis" on the one hand and a "self-actualization" or activity seeking hypothesis on the other. The former postulates that the inherent tendency of all living matter is its own self-elimination, that the child is "born in anger" and that human beings under the best of circumstances spend their lives in the pursuit of pleasure which is simply the elimination of pain. "Man is said to be inherently conservative and his instincts have this conservative

²⁴Erwin Singer, *Key Concepts in Psychotherapy* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), p. 22.

quality. There is an inherent longing for the *status quo ante*--the elimination of stimulation."²⁵

The second polar position is that man is inherently self-actualizing, striving toward the future with an eye toward understanding and growth. It is in this general group that Psychosynthesis clearly belongs.

While both groups assert you have the capacity to do what you must do, and 'It's better to know than not to know,' for to hear and see and know is health, they differ--and this difference is crucial--on what is to be seen, heard and known. One group exclaims 'Be aware of your inherent aggressive tendencies but renounce them.' The other group insists, 'Be aware of your inherent power and constructive potentials and accept them--with the satisfaction they can bring and the pain and burdens they impose.'²⁶

As Singer notes, these two contrasting conceptions concerning the basic nature of man must bring in their wake differing therapeutic aims, knowledge and awareness toward which it will try to help their patients.

Since Psychosynthesis presents an extremely clear view of the "self-actualizing" position, it is important to spell out the implications this state of affairs holds for pastoral counseling.

The above analysis *does* make general comparisons. It *does not* hold that those thought forms differing from Christianity hold no truth. Psychoanalysis, for example, has been a leading force in fostering humane attitudes toward treating mental patients by showing they are not to be *blamed* for unconscious behavior. And as Cobb points

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

out a measure of transcendence is to be expected, no matter where the self is located.

The analysis *does* point out that the vision of Christianity is not always comparable to other intellectual thought forms, and that quite different expectations regarding the potentials and possibilities of man follow, according to the differences.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PASTORAL COUNSELING

What are the implications of the foregoing analysis, regarding the possible contributions of Psychosynthesis toward a growth oriented model for pastoral counseling?

First it establishes the fact that psychosynthesis definitely falls into the growth oriented category. Its view of the Self as constantly seeking actualization in and through the various vehicles of personal expression insures this.

Second, Psychosynthesis may widen the horizons of service from pastoral counseling. Pastoral counseling, as influenced by secular psychology has largely followed the rest of the churches in ministering to the middle class. Its thought forms are largely congenial with conservative thought preserving the status quo, encouraging adjustment and a learning process congenial with the existing system, whatever that might be. This is not absolutely true, but certainly generally so. The existential psychologies have been leading exceptions to this rule, but in some cases their extreme individualism and lack of supportive mythic imagery has been a limiting factor.

Because of its view of man as a radically possible creature, Psychosynthesis offers pastoral counseling a model for radical growth, applicable to radical situations.

This might include a major emphasis on the needs of the polar opposites of society which are often missed by other therapies, namely, the extremely gifted, and the extremely deprived.

The very gifted bear the burden of their immense potential, the capacity to envision what others only sense dimly. They face the great task of disciplining themselves to actualize these visions, and the task of dealing with the perceived threat of becoming lost in their creative regressions by which they capture the resources of the super conscious.

These people, which our world needs so badly, find very little specific help among contemporary pastoral counseling models. Psychosynthesis offers this in a clear way, both conceptually, as I have shown, and by offering specific tools for growth.

The extremely deprived bear another burden. They may have low native intelligence potential, be strapped by severe inner conflicts, enslaved by addiction, suffer brain damage, loss of bodily functions, or suffer cultural deprivation due to racial or socio-economic origins.

Pastoral counseling, along with most of secular psychology, has too often decided that these people simply do not have the native ability or correct environment to benefit from either pastoral counseling or existing Christian education programs.

In the face of this, Psychosynthesis affirms that every man

is self and related to Self. This is true for *all*, for all of the above deficiencies may be disidentified from, and the appropriate level of self-development and affirmation discovered.

In the past, when faced with such extreme problems, a minister had to jettison his psychology and break out his Bible. This shows how ephemerally much psychological technique is related to deep human need. The existential psychologies once again have helped us find *meaning* in such situations. But the hope for some concrete improvement, or deep approach to training for self-development and change has been largely absent.

The Harmonization of Social Conflicts

Because the self in every man is good, seen as universal, and different than his behavior, a powerful point of contact for social change is introduced.

The most powerful factor in successful social change seems to be steadfast persistence in a positive effort. In the face of bitter and violent opposition, the will (unsustained by a vision of hope) grows weak, and counter violence ensues. The Self in Psychosynthesis is a powerful enabling concept.

By and large, psychology has simply been anathema to the proponents of social change. This is partly because the energy directed inwardly for change is drained away from "the movement." But very few psychological models provide serious thought about patterns for wider harmonization of conflicting wills, or motivation for bringing this

about. Further, those models not containing the possibility of spiritual existence cannot offer a clear alternative to self interest which does not seemingly do violence to the human personality. So social conflict becomes "us against them," with the possibility of a transcendent and unifying position remaining unconscious.

Psychosynthesis with its focus upon continual self-transcendence, and even the harmonization of many wills with a higher Will, opens up many possibilities for pastoral counseling contributions on a social action basis.

The Family

The family of an individual forms both the matrix of his past, the most powerful relationships of the present, and the most powerful human attractions of his future.

There has been a strong tendency in psychology to treat parents as hopeless problems which the patient must learn to adjust to. Parental introjects have been viewed largely in negative terms. The notion of the self turns this around completely by positing unequivocally that the coming into existence of the person is *good*. The counselor approaches the person with that firm presupposition. The parents are therefore "good" in some way as well, for nothing comes from nothing. They become resources, first in the imagination, through the symbols of the super conscious, then in actual confrontation where the essential strength and goodness of the parent is affirmed, and where inappropriate behavior from the parent is faced for what it is. Appropriate

states of grief, despair, joy, anger, etc. are supported. Thus, the synthesis of family energies and wills may be worked out on a non-idealized basis.

In-Depth Education

The presupposition of the "emergence of consciousness from unconsciousness" model is that to educate in depth, one must deal with dangerous and difficult phenomena. Christianity, affirming the God of love as the ground of all being, had to content itself with a shallow sort of educational model of conventional goodness.

There is more than a note of truth in this, but it is not the whole truth. While all of the deeper Christian disciplines have allowed the "demon at the door" to emerge into consciousness, they have insisted that he gains his energy from a deeper source, a source which can only be described as love. There has been an insistence upon maintaining a *deeper* Godward thrust, by the practice of various positive spiritual exercises. These are available to people on a wider educational, rather than strictly therapeutic, basis, the "demons" being dealt with by more intimate pastoral care.

Worship

Because of the affinity of the concept of the Self with God, and the contents of the super conscious with revelation, psychosynthesis lends itself to the enhancement of both personal and corporate worship.

The problem of worship in our culture involves a lack of

immediacy in the experiences of spiritual reality. By involving several pastors in spiritual Psychosynthesis a single professional pastoral counselor might well enhance the worship of thousands.

Individual pastors may likewise in turn train individuals and groups, or use certain evocative techniques for enabling the congregation to contact super conscious energies in worship.

An important question for Christian theology involves the structure of existence inherent in the concepts and techniques of Psychosynthesis.

Some of the concepts, for instance the Self, are adaptable to some Eastern religions, as well as Christianity. Many of the meditative techniques stem from Yogic as well as Christian origins.

With regard to the conceptual questions, I feel I have shown that the structure of existence visualized by Psychosynthesis is compatible with Christianity.

What remains, and I think it is an important point, is to invest the specific techniques of Psychosynthesis with Christian meaning and purpose.

Thomas Merton has aptly said that there is a decisive difference between meditation east and west. For the most part, Eastern meditative approaches may be separated from their religious roots with little change of value. The experience gained is not radically altered. But Christian meditation always *remains Christian* meditation.²⁷

²⁷Thomas Merton, "Zen and the Birds of Appetite," *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, II:1 (1970), 64.

By this he seems to be referring to the intimate relationship between God and history, inherent in the Judaeo-Christian religion. The meaning of communion with Christ has temporal and eternal significance that is not amenable to relativization without critical alteration of meaning.

This is a serious theological issue. Though I cannot explore it fully here, I conclude at this point, that while the reduction of specific-Christian meaning of meditative experience is not possible without significant change in meaning, no such problem exists for the Christianization of most Eastern meditative techniques, *provided the spiritual structure of existence is contained, and provided the measures of strength of spirit (degree of self-transcendence) and health of spirit (concern for others rather than pre-occupation with self) are seriously regarded.*

Further considerations of these issues is important, but until specific data in the form of particular techniques is introduced discussion is difficult. I now turn to the task of considering some of the methods of Psychosynthesis.

SECTION TWO
METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

CHAPTER III

AN OVERVIEW OF PSYCHOSYNTHESIS METHODS

In psychosynthesis, the concepts of the Self and the imagination and the Will bring the human organism to a stance of openness and self-transcendence toward inner depths and outer reality. These concepts hold a view of reality similar to those of Christianity. Where, then, does psychosynthesis lead methodologically? To put it briefly, psychosynthesis leads in the direction of a skillful utilization of *active techniques*. It seems to me that this direction proceeds immediately from the concept of the Self as a *causative given*. If we look upon Self as creative, synthesizing, conscious, both transcendent and immanent, and constantly functional, it follows that through heightened consciousness one might be able to *actively* cooperate with the Self at the highest and deepest level.

Because the activities of the Self are experienced inwardly and thus, mythically, the understanding of the process of man's inner nature is a critical point. Freud insisted that the study of a person's symbolizations was the study of the individual. However, despite this profound recognition, Freud and many of his students unfortunately looked upon symbolization as a process designed to obscure rather than to communicate. This peculiar contradiction was a direct consequence of their general theory of man.

So long as the image of man was a vision of him as both inherently regressive in nature and simultaneously eager to hide this tendency, symbols had to be understood as methods of dissembling rather than tools in expression.¹

Psychosynthesis adopts the opposite view (also held by Jung) that man's symbolic process is revealing of the essential nature of man. Psychosynthesis visualizes a purposive road from the deepest levels of man's consciousness in light, through his unconscious complexes and aberrations (which may be revealed in both outer behavior and inner revelations such as dreams), all thrusting upward towards an ever heightening harmony of complexification and synthesis.

Understanding man in this way, it is possible to begin almost anywhere with the human phenomenon and, assuming that *all* behavior is purposive and meaningful (including symptomatic behavior), to follow each rivulet towards converging and ever larger streams of meaningful human behavior. Seeing man in this way, enlightened human self effort is not to be taken lightly, and reexamination of the means by which men have striven toward integration through the ages appears to be a fruitful source of investigation.

This is not to say that psychoanalysis is to be dismissed peremptorily. Rather, it means that, incorporating as helpful discoveries, one may go *beyond* psychoanalysis through the use of various active techniques for the development of the will, the imagination, and for contacting the energies of the Self. In addition, psycho-

¹Erwin Singer, *Key Concepts in Psychotherapy* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), p. 81.

synthesis offers an overall plan for utilizing the techniques.

Active Techniques for Enhancing Transcendence

As I've indicated in my analysis of psychosynthesis and Christianity, I feel that of extreme importance is the phenomenon of "spiritual existence," the inherent possibility of man for identifying himself with his infinitely reflexive quality of self-consciousness. Here the contents of consciousness, and consciousness itself, are distinguished from one another.

Psychosynthesis has a very important technique for facilitating the experience of spiritual existence. This is a technique of dis-identification *from the contents* of consciousness and identification *with consciousness itself*. Prolonged practice of this technique and other techniques offered by psychosynthesis has led Assagioli and others to an experience of higher Self. This is profound, ineffable, illuminating, empowering and, as Tillich would say, "grasping."

The whole process of identifying with the Self is one of transcendence. Recently transcendence has been looked upon with considerable suspicion. "Secularization" of religion, and the diminishing of the concept of a transcendent God was the subject of considerable effort. In the process, there was a tendency to focus upon the evils of inappropriate transcendence, that is, the evils which can come from inappropriate objectification of experience. An example is the objectification of the Self, as evidenced by such statements as "Man has a soul," as though he has a soul the same way he has a hat or a pair of

shoes. An extension of this process involves absolutizing representative images of God. In this process, the symbolic form in its representation of God (and all representations of God are symbolic) is absolutized and its dynamic properties lost. Paul Tillich devoted much effort and writing to correcting this error and affirmed that a symbol points to a reality beyond itself, and participates in that reality. I agree with his analysis, and I am in essential sympathy with much of the aim of the "secularizers."

However, in the process of cutting out inappropriate thought forms regarding transcendence, some theologians and many ministers and counselors have dismissed the possibility of its positive effects. Psychosynthesis as well as process theology (represented by John Cobb) point out that transcendence is at the heart of spiritual existence, and provides means by which one's own transcendence may be experienced.

Abraham Maslow has been more interested in this phenomenon than perhaps any other contemporary American psychologist. He has enumerated no less than *thirty-five* meanings of transcendence which offer positive resources for human experience. Among these are transcendence of time, culture, opinion of others, dichotomies, experience of the realm of being, Taoistic objectivity and ultimate humanness.² Church men who do counseling have certainly had many experiences with people who are transcending their own experiences inappropriately, and who misuse the concept of God as transcendent. And, therefore, I'm

²Abraham Maslow, "Various Meanings of Transcendence," *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 1:1 (Spring 1969), 56-66.

not suggesting that this subject should be approached naively. Nevertheless, as man made in God's image, we cannot ignore his transcendence or ours. What *must* be guarded against in this process is the objectification and absolutization of symbols.

In leading us in the direction of a psychology of active techniques where the experiencing of self-transcendence is central, psychosynthesis makes valuable contributions and, as shown in the previous section, is based on firm underpinnings.

A Psychology of the Here and Now

The techniques of psychosynthesis encourage the maintenance of existential awareness for the patient. This is illustrated by the guided daydream technique of Robert Desoille. To evoke the state of daydreaming, the therapist asks the patient to lie down on the couch in a quiet room, to close his eyes, relax, and to daydream aloud. Most important is to maintain a concrete existential situation. Therefore, the patient is not asked to tell what comes into his mind. We know the person from his phenomenal universe, not from "free associations" in his isolated and interior world. Therefore, from the very beginning the attention of the person is not directed on himself, but on a vivid world of concrete events and meetings. The patient is asked to see, to hear, eventually to smell.

A resulting difference from the traditional analysis will necessarily be that the guided daydream never moves into the past, but always in the present, in the 'here and

now' in the actual world of the patient. In this situation the patient lives and reacts as a human existence: as 'a consciousness that is involved,' a 'being in a situation.'³

This understanding of the immediacy of the therapeutic moment extends to all of the psychosynthetic techniques.

Creative Anxiety

In opting for a view of man as being an activity-seeking creature, psychosynthesis finds itself in essential agreement with this statement by Viktor Frankl:

. . . It can be seen that mental health is based on a certain degree of tension, the tension between what one has already achieved, and what he still ought to accomplish, or the gap between what he is and what he should become. Such a tension is inherent in the human being and therefore is indispensable to mental well being. We should not, then, be hesitant about challenging man with meaning potentialities for him to actualize, thus invoking his will to meaning out of its latency. I consider it a dangerous misconception of mental hygiene to assume that what man needs in the first place, is equilibrium or, as it is called in biology, 'homeostasis,' i.e., a tensionless state. What man actually needs is not a tension-less state but rather the striving and struggling for some goal worthy of him. What he needs is not the discharge of tension at any cost, but the call of a potential meaning waiting to be fulfilled by him. What man needs is not homeostasis but what I call 'noo-dynamics,' i.e., the spiritual dynamics in a polar field of tension where the one pole is represented by a meaning to be fulfilled and the other pole by the man who has to fulfill it. One should not think that this holds only for normal conditions; in neurotic individuals, it is even more valid. If architects want to strengthen a decrepit arch, they *increase* the load which is laid upon it, for thereby the parts are joined more firmly

³ Adrian Van Kaam, *The Third Force in European Psychology--Its Expression in a Theory of Psychotherapy* (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 1960), p. 161.

together. So if therapists wish to foster their patient's mental health, they, too, should not be afraid to increase the load which is brought about by a re-orientation toward the meaning of one's life.⁴

This understanding of the useful function of anxiety in the therapeutic endeavor is clearly shown in the psychosynthetic technique for the training of the will.⁵ In this technique the person is initially asked to imagine as vividly as possible all the unfortunate consequences to himself and to others as a result of his inadequate will. He is then to picture himself similarly experiencing the advantages that would come to him if he did have a strong will. In this way his anxiety and tension are increased, and he becomes motivated for developing an aspect of his personality which is necessary for him to fulfill his needs as a human being.

The Inner Man

In seeking to explain psychosynthesis, Assagioli makes a comparison between existential psychotherapies and psychosynthesis, noting that there are both differences and similarities. A fundamental similarity he notes is "the method of starting *from within*, beginning with the *Self* of the individual, with his *presence*. This means to attribute a central importance to the concept and experience of 'identity'...."⁶

⁴Viktor E. Frankl, *Basic Concepts of Logotherapy* (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 1962), pp. 3-4.

⁵Roberto Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis: A Manual of Principles and Techniques* (New York: Hobbs, Dorman, 1965), pp. 125-137.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 4.

Directed imagery, a variation of the directed daydream technique previously explained, has been found helpful in dealing with people who are overly responsive to their environment, enabling them to become more "inner directed."

Directed imagery, in my experience, appears to be most useful in dealing with patients who are more interested in acting than thinking. Such patients are, psychologically speaking, perceptually dominant, environmentally dependent, and more responsive to external than to internal cues. Directed imagery then becomes a means of teaching the patient a more productive means of dealing with Self by shifting the focus of control from external to internal sources.⁷

This same emphasis is shared by Abraham Maslow who attributes to people of great creativity a quality of inwardness. He notes that such a person's ability to become "lost in the present" seems to be a *sine qua non* for creativeness of any kind. He also notes that this quality is paradoxically related to the quality of transcendence. "It has begun to appear strongly that this phenomenon is a diluted, more secular, more frequent version of the mystical experience that has been described so often as to have become what Huxley called The Perennial Philosophy."⁸

Maslow's words are suggestive of a truth which is forwarded by psychosynthesis: that the Self of every man is related to an overarching Self, that in his inwardness, man finds himself over against

⁷William J. Chestnut, "Directed Imagery: A Means for Dealing with Patient Defensiveness," *Psychotherapy, Theory, Research, and Practice*, VIII:4 (Winter 1971), 326.

⁸Abraham H. Maslow, *The Creative Attitude* (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 1963), p. 5.

the "Other," that in the depths of his inward attentiveness, he somehow becomes open to reality which in its essence may be contacted in the rest of the universe. He thus becomes simultaneously inward and outward in a new and heightened way.

Inner-Outer Reciprocity

As suggested in my paragraph above, psychosynthesis indicates that discovering one's own inner reality is immediately relevant to discovering the essential reality of any outer situation. This stems from the insight that the personal Self is related to a higher Self and the deduction which follows: All selves, being related to a higher Self, are intimately related to one another. If inner discoveries can affect the outer world, then the outer world may also influence the inner world. That psychosynthesis holds to such a view is evidenced by its confidence that active techniques can effect a profound change on one's inner world of experience. *This is an assertion of far reaching effect.* Attention upon outer symbols, ritual acts, deeds of love, acts of courage, works of self sacrifice, all have their impact upon the health of the spirit. This understanding that there is a reciprocity between the inner work of the spirit and the outer works of the hands, so to speak, takes psychology a gigantic leap beyond the thinking of orthodox psychoanalysis and embraces a whole host of active techniques. Given this understanding, a psychologist may pick up a bodily symptom, or a dream, and be led to a solution of the indicated psychopathology through alteration of (for example) a family situation.

Once man's existence is seen as a *gestalt*, a whole, a whole web of inconsistencies and incongruities become illuminated. (The same truth is suggested by Perls' notion of the ego as a function of the organism, and Kurt Lewin's idea of a "field.") Thus, psychosynthesis finds itself able to utilize the approach to immediate life situations envisioned by William Glasser⁹ and Virginia Satir¹⁰ as well as the understanding of depth psychology.

It is interesting to note that, although Jung regarded the symbolic process as revealing man's nature, he failed to develop utilization of this reciprocal inner-outer understanding. In my opinion, this is due to his concept of the Self.¹¹ For Jung, the Self was epitomized by the Uroboros, the snake eating its own tail in a constant ever-renewing process of creation and destruction. I believe this represents a brilliant analysis of the nature of *existence*. But Being is different.

Being is not hermaphroditic, is not subject to creation and destruction. This assertion moves beyond the male-female deities of nature religions, the explication of which is magical. Religiously, it puts us over against the One who transcends the opposites inherent in this world. Psychologically, it takes us beyond magic (though it

⁹William Glasser, *Reality Therapy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 93.

¹⁰Virginia Satir, *Conjoint Family Therapy* (Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books, Inc., 1967), p. 179.

¹¹C. G. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963), p. 60.

includes magic) and places us in a posture of continual response-ability. We are not only acted upon by our inner world with its symbol-borne energies, but we actively and freely choose to attribute meaning and importance to them. While Jung affirms this in principle, it is as though he doesn't believe it enough to "stand against the cosmic forces as a God-like substantial being bringing meaning into the world process."¹² Assagioli, in making a radical distinction between being and existence, and visualizing the Self as an entity, a causative given as opposed to something in the process of becoming, provides the essential over-againstness necessary for the reciprocal understanding of inner-outer cause and effect which Jung fails to do.

Transpersonal Psychology

In existential thought, being always stands in the midst of, and simultaneously transcendent to, existence in the world. By providing psychology with techniques to foster the experience of being, of the personal Self, of oneself as a center of pure consciousness, and by providing means of symbolically approaching the higher Self in which the experience of one's relation to being is approximated, psychosynthesis finds itself in the forefront of the transpersonal psychology movement. Transpersonal psychology is interested in the evoking and studying of experiences of unitive consciousness, ultimate values, peak experiences, ecstasy, cosmic awareness, individual and

¹²Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act* (New York: Collier, 1962), p. 288.

species-wide synergy, transcendental, phenomena, and sacralization of everyday life.¹³ The concepts of psychosynthesis have been in the forefront of this movement and have offered a conceptual framework for understanding the phenomena which are under experimental study.

A Therapy of Worship

In his book, *Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling*, Dr. Howard Clinebell describes the master goal of pastoral counseling as follows:

Pastoral counseling is the utilization, by a minister, of the one-to-one or small group relationship, to help people to handle their problems of living more adequately, and grow toward fulfilling their potentialities. This is achieved by helping them reduce the inner blocks which prevent them from relating in need-satisfying ways.¹⁴

The dynamic approach of psychosynthesis in handling these blocks is similar to that of Christian worship. Basic to both understandings is the concept that deeper and further within than the inner blocks are psychic resources which may be contacted in and through active techniques. These result in the strengthening of awareness of one's inner potentialities and capabilities, with a concomitant release of energies which may be skillfully directed in an effort to overcome inner blocks and thus initiate need satisfying behavior and attitudes.

This, after all, has been the role of the Christian Church for centuries. In the midst of the most dismal existential circumstances,

¹³"Statement of Purpose," *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, I:1 (Spring 1969), i.

¹⁴Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., *Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), p. 20.

the Church has insistently affirmed that there is something beyond, *more than*, the vale of tears. The fact that this stance has been adopted *defensively* by innumerable Christians should not blind us to the fact that there is *more than* our existence. There is Being.

Let us take, for example, feelings. Feelings, in the midst of anxiety-producing situations, are often absolutized. In the field of psychology, to which pastoral counseling is heavily indebted for its insights into human affairs, feelings are presently regarded as a frontier of observable phenomena. As such, they fall into the realm of "it" in the thought of Martin Buber. This means feelings are part of our *existence*.¹⁵

That feelings yield no personal life is understood only by a few. For the most personal life of all seems to reside in feelings, and if, like modern man, you have learned to concern yourself wholly with your own feelings, despair at their unreality will not easily instruct you in a better way--for despair is also an interesting feeling.

True public and true personal lives are two forms of connection. In that they come into being and endure, feelings (the changing content) and institutions (the constant form) are necessary; *but put together they do not create human life*: this is done by the third, the central presence of the *Thou*, or rather more truly stated, by the central *Thou* that has been received in the present.¹⁶

In effect, Buber says there is *more than* what we have experienced. There is Being. This has been preached by the Church for years, and has recently been enunciated by existential psychotherapists.

¹⁵ Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 44.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

What psychosynthesis does is provide techniques for enhancing the sense of this reality. Among the techniques for personal psychosynthesis, the most striking example is that of *dis-identification* and *self-identification*.

I shall take this opportunity to describe this technique and explain how I see it as moving pastoral counseling toward a therapy of worship. I ask the reader in advance not to be misled by the simplicity of the exercise, but rather, to experience it repeatedly until the profundity of the truth contained emerges to him.

The following is from Assagioli's explanation of the exercise of disidentification with the contents of consciousness and self-identification with the personal Self as a center of pure consciousness.¹⁷

"I put my body into a comfortable and relaxed position, eyes closed. This done, I affirm: 'I *have* a body but *I am not* my body. My body may find itself in different conditions or sickness; it may be rested or tired, but that has nothing to do with myself, the real "I." My body is my precious instrument of experience and of action in the outer world, but it is only an instrument. I treat it well; I seek to keep it in good health, but *it is not* myself. I *have* a body, but *I am not* my body.'"

"I *have* emotions but *I am not* my emotions. These emotions are countless, contradictory, changing, and yet I know that I always remain

¹⁷ Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis: A Manual*, pp. 118-119.

I, *myself*, in times of hope or of despair, in joy or in pain, in state of irritation or calm. Since I can observe, understand and judge my emotions, and then increasingly dominate, direct and utilize them, it is evident that they are *not myself*. I *have* emotions, but I *am not* my emotions."

"I *have* desires, but I *am not* my desires, aroused by drives, physical and emotional, and by outer influences. Desires too are changeable and contradictory, with alternations of attraction and repulsion. I *have* desires but *they are not myself*."

"I *have* an intellect, but I *am not* my intellect. It is more or less developed and active; it is undisciplined but teachable; it is an organ of knowledge in regard to the outer world as well as the inner; but *it is not myself*. I *have* an intellect, but I *am not* my intellect."

"After this disidentification of the 'I' from its contents of consciousness (sensations, emotions, desires and thoughts) I recognize and affirm that I am a center of pure consciousness. I am a Center of Will, capable of mastering, directing, using all my psychological processes and my physical body."

When one has practiced the exercise for some time it can be modified by a swift and dynamic use of the first stages of disidentification leading to a deeper consideration of the fourth stage of *self-identification*, coupled with an inner dialogue along the following lines:

"What am I then? What remains after discarding from my self

identity the physical, emotional and mental contents of my personality, my ego? It is the essence of myself--a center of pure self-consciousness and self-realization. It is the permanent factor in the ever varying flow of my personal life. It is that which gives me the sense of being, of permanence, of inner security. I recognize and I affirm myself as a center of pure self-consciousness. I realize that the center not only has a static self awareness but also a dynamic power; it is capable of observing, mastering, directing and using all the psychological processes in the physical body. I am a center of awareness and of power."

Once the profound truth contained in this simple exercise dawns upon the reader, the idol of feelings is dethroned. A new search begins, a search for the *Thou*. "Spiritual existence" emerges as a possibility. Now, if in addition, our inner mythic structures provide us images suggesting further possibilities, we may persist in a higher ascent. In this ascent, we will most assuredly experience a heightening and widening of our consciousness, and thus greater freedom and further humanization. In addition, it may well be that we will experience more directly the higher Self, in which case an infusion of energy and accompanying ineffable experience give further impetus to our pilgrimage and quest for contacting this Center in those who come our way.

Christian worship has for centuries been teaching us this very truth. We come to the Eucharist to fix the eyes of our spirit upon the crucified and risen Lord, and in partaking of His body and

blood, we affirm that our present life, fraught with the ambiguities of being-in-the-world, is deeply meaningful. We are taught that in the world, suffering, if we will experience it and not shrink from it, will issue in healing. But the Life-Death cycle is not final. There is more. There is the encountering of one's own possibility of transcending this endless round of opposites and thus discovering meaning in it. There is the possibility of encountering our Center of Being, the Thou, which stands so close at hand during each step on life's way, and in the very midst of both death and life. And psychosynthesis provides some techniques for fostering this spiritual existence and sense of Being.

Harmony with Christian Concepts

Over a period of years the effort to integrate psychology and religion has provided a process by which the chaff from both disciplines has been gradually winnowed. And psychosynthesis is a fruit of this process. Prior to the rise of existentialism, existential analysis, and existential psychotherapy, Christianity stood largely alone providing a conceptual structure for spiritual existence in the West. Its ancient symbolism, and the ineffectualness with which it so often forwarded its finest precepts, has led most psychologists and many pastoral counselors to relegate Christianity's thought forms and insights to Sunday worship, while the real hammer and tong works of counseling was done with the insights and techniques of psychology.

The emergence of psychosynthesis not only tends to strengthen

general awareness of the contributions of Christianity, it provides some fresh insights in understanding our own faith. This is especially important in today's age when man is experiencing a widespread emergence of unconscious material. John Cobb notes that spiritual existence provides for the possibility of an integrated relationship with one's own unconscious while other forms of axial existence establish the seat of existence in the conscious mind, and are fearful and repressive of unconscious contents, thus leaving modern man with no framework within which to understand his erupting unconscious. The Bible is full of mythic statements which, far from being archaic and regressive thought forms, have profound implications for contemporary man and offer direction for the current situation. A re-evaluation of the Christian tradition from the standpoint of viewing the totality of human experience as seeking meaningfulness and purpose, might well result in a new trust of the unconscious and a widespread release of large amounts of spiritual energy. The pastoral counselor who has been able to do this heretofore has flown in the face of much of academic psychology and rationalized religion. Adventurous spirits in the pastoral counseling field should get considerable support from the reading of the literature of psychosynthesis.

Helping Ministers Where They Are

As the pastoral counseling movement has grown, it has not been without some perennial problems. While expanding the consciousness of participants and equipping them with new tools for dealing with human

problems, clinical pastoral training has also resulted in the departure of a large number of men from the pastoral ministry. This has been, in part, because the tools of pastoral counseling, being adopted from the fields of psychotherapy, have not been very well adapted to the situation of the congregation.¹⁸ While deepening the man, the pastoral counseling experts have not provided congregational ministers with models of deepening their ministry sufficiently. Since it was assumed that depth could only be reached by passive techniques used for the exploration of the unconscious, and the ferreting out of problems, the old model of pastoral counseling provided few techniques for actively contacting the positive depths of the human psyche and educating, or leading them forth. The revised model, as explained by Howard Clinebell, provides a much wider and improved approach to pastoral counseling in which relationships are actively approached and the spiritual dimension of existence considered directly.¹⁹ The addition of psycho-synthetic techniques with an emphasis on the experience of spiritual existence, the strengthening of the will, and the experience of the super conscious should provide a welcome addition for helping the pastoral counselor achieve new heights and depths in his congregational ministry. The following quote describes the way in which one minister visualizes this as happening:

¹⁸E. Mansell Patterson, "Systems Pastoral Care," *Journal of Pastoral Care*, XXVI:1 (March 1972), 4.

¹⁹Clinebell, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

The whole purpose of psychosynthesis is toward the achievement of spiritual integration. It is not a religious system, rather a form of existential psychiatry, but its techniques have a bearing upon Christian ways of thinking and a Christian experience, and they are worth enumerating. Its technique of catharsis has a bearing upon the Christian practice of confession; its critical analysis of the Self has a bearing upon the Christian duty of Self-understanding and Self-judgment; its method of training of the will had a bearing upon the Christian aim of self-discipline; its emphasis on spiritual synthesis, meditation and the use of symbols has a bearing upon Christian worship, prayer, contemplation, sacraments, and spirituality; and its emphasis on the importance of interpersonal relationships has a bearing upon the subject of Christian fellowship.

Psychosynthesis is no short cut to wholeness. It is all embracing. It cannot be learned by perfunctory study. It demands all that the student can give it. But any pastor who is willing to give the necessary time to pursue its study and to think through its implications will find his own life enriched and his pastoral potential enhanced.²⁰

Thus far I have explained how psychosynthesis leads psychology to methods of experiencing the truth of existential analysis, and how it leads pastoral counseling in the direction of a therapy of worship. In an effort to show how this is further possible and to lead into my next chapter which deals with the overall process of psychosynthesis and its various specific techniques, I conclude with a quotation from Assagioli as he describes the use of Dante's *Divine Comedy* in spiritual psychosynthesis.

The central symbolical meaning of the *Divine Comedy* is a wonderful picture of a complete psychosynthesis. The first part--the pilgrimage through hell--indicates the analytical exploration of the lower unconscious. The second part--the ascent to the mountain of Purgatory--indicates the process of moral purification, gradual raising of the level of consciousness through the use of active techniques. The third

²⁰Owen Brandon, *The Pastor and His Ministry* (London: S.P.C.K., 1972), pp. 96-97.

part--the Visit to Paradise or Heaven--depicts in an unsurpassed way the various stages of super conscious realization, up to the final vision of a universal spirit, of God Himself, in which Love and Will are fused.²¹

²¹ Assagioli, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

CHAPTER IV

THE METHODS OF PERSONAL PSYCHOSYNTHESIS

Psychosynthesis is essentially an open and not a closed system. It is a frame of reference which includes the biological, the psychological and also the spiritual, philosophical and ethical realms, and hence, strives to be comprehensive and inclusive without being eclectic.¹

Because of the great number of techniques which Dr. Assagioli lists in his book, *Psychosynthesis: A Manual of Principles and Techniques*, it is important to remember that the uniqueness of psychosynthesis lies in using these techniques with an eye toward the optimum self-actualization of the human being. Many other psychotherapeutic schools of thought utilize similar active techniques, for instance, behavior therapy employs systematic de-sensitization techniques extensively.² In psychosynthesis, however, the use of techniques which are quite similar to systematic desensitization take on a different tone. I can only at this point say that this tenor or spirit emanates from the deep understanding of psychosynthesis concerning man as Self, a willing, synthesizing, and transcending being and goes far beyond the goal of symptom removal. The reader is asked to bear this in mind as he approaches this chapter.

¹Graham C. Taylor, *The Essentials of Psychosynthesis* (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 1968), p. 4.

²Joseph Wolpe, *The Practice of Behavior Therapy* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1969), p. 84.

The process of psychosynthesis has been outlined by Graham C. Taylor as follows:³

1. *Thorough knowledge of one's personality.* This corresponds in part to the stage of analysis, and implies a courageous facing of the dark forces of the lower unconscious. Psychoanalysis frequently stops here, but the regions of the higher unconscious, the super conscious, are also explored in psychosynthesis. For example, dreams may have constructive or what Jung calls "prospective tendencies," and often are of super conscious origin. Thus, the patient discovers the vast psychic energy latent in the total unconscious, which it can use for constructive purposes.

2. *Control of the various elements of the personality.* This stage involves: disintegration of harmful images or complexes; and the control and utilization of the energies thus set free. It is based on the principle that we are dominated by everything with which our Self becomes identified and we are free to use for our own purposes everything from which we disidentify ourselves.

3. *Realization of one's true self.* In most cases this unifying center will be on the personal level--the personal Self. After there has been a reasonable integration on this level, there may be a gradual expansion of the personal consciousness towards the transpersonal or universal level. Psychosynthesis provides a method of growth which

³Taylor, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

proceeds in sound step-by-step manner, enabling the patient to integrate his "unique" experiences. As the personal Self becomes increasingly able to identify with the transpersonal Self, there tends to be an integration on a more all-inclusive or cosmic level, and this is what Assagioli calls the stage of spiritual psychosynthesis as opposed to the personal psychosynthesis.

There is no rigid separation between stages; often it is possible for patients to contact super conscious energies early in the process of psychosynthesis, thereby gaining the strength and inspiration to face the more frightening aspects of the lower unconscious.

4. *Psychosynthesis: the formation or re-construction of the personality around a new center.* There are several stages involved here. The first step is to formulate a plan of action. And this will, of course, vary with the individual. Some will find it helpful to use an "ideal model" as a source of inspiration. The person is asked to choose this model self-consciously, and the model may be one of all-around perfection or of a more specialized nature, such as the model of being a good writer, teacher, wife, father, and so forth. Other people will prefer a path of greater spontaneity, allowing themselves to be led by the spirit within, and working toward the goal by eliminating the various obstacles and resistances in their personality, so that the channels of communication with their transpersonal self are widened and deepened. A blending in various degrees of these two attitudes is what is usually developed, and the influence of the therapist as a model is acknowledged.

Once the plan has been decided upon, the actual reconstruction of the new personality begins. This is done by:

1. Transmutation and sublimation of the various energies available when this is indicated.

2. Development of the aspects of the personality which are either deficient or inadequate for the purpose which we desire to obtain. This development can be carried out by means of evocation, auto-suggestion, creative affirmation, by methodological training of the underdeveloped functions such as memory, imagination, will and so on.

3. Coordination and subordination of the various psychological energies and functions--the creation of a firm organization of the personality.

We turn now to a description of the various techniques in the general order in which they might appear in an average psychosynthesis. In doing so, I shall group them under the four headings listed above.

THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE OF ONE'S PERSONALITY

Assessing the Conscious Personality

Psychoanalysis, with its emphasis on the unconscious, generally starts with its exploration through specific techniques such as free association and interpretation of dreams in an effort to explore the unconscious aspects of the personality. Psychosynthesis, on the other hand, usually begins with an assessment of the *conscious* aspects of the personality. This logic stems from a conviction that, if a man

wants to live consciously, he needs more than a dim, passive awareness of his own ego.

"Moreover, the distinction between conscious and unconscious components is much less sharp than psychoanalysis asserts. It is a relative distinction: there is a constant osmosis between the field or area of consciousness and that of the unconscious."⁴ Further, the strengthening of the conscious personality prepares it for easier assimilation of the unconscious aspects. There are real dangers in the premature eruption of unconscious forces in an unprepared and loosely knit personality.

This assessment of the conscious personality requires on the part of the patient a certain degree of objectivity. Already the process of disidentification is beginning, and serves as a technique for beginning to acquire pure self-awareness, the pure sense of self-identity. This strengthens the personal "I" for what may be frightening experiences in later uncovering of unconscious material. Assagioli usually begins by asking the patients to *write* a biography of their own life. He points out that the personality expresses itself differently through writing than it does verbally, and that different aspects of the personality may emerge through writing than will emerge through verbal representations.⁵ Whenever possible, the patient is encouraged to keep a diary during treatment. This is useful in saving time and in

⁴Roberto Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis: A Manual of Principles and Techniques* (New York: Hobbs, Dorman, 1965), p. 68.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 70.

providing a vehicle for different elements of the personality to express themselves. The technique of writing also serves to strengthen the active effort of concentration, attention and will.

The patient is asked to identify his various personality traits, and evaluate their origins. The parents, peer group, cultural milieu, and racial characteristics are possible origins of personal traits. The attribution to these various sources, and attitudes toward them, yield insights for patient and therapist as to how the patient sees and relates to himself.

The patient is also asked to evaluate his own conscious psychological complexes. "Complex" is understood here as a constellation of "emotionally charged psychological elements, revealed under certain conditions."⁶ An example is the "inferiority complex." People today are familiar with the concept, and many are quite aware of their complexes and can discuss them openly. In evaluating his own sub-personalities, the patient is simply asked, "Have you noticed that you behave differently in your office, at home, in solitude, at church, etc.?"⁷ He is asked to describe himself in these various roles and, in this way, is brought to an awareness of the differences and contradictions in his behavior. This process is often quite revealing and evokes in the patient an awareness of his need for psychosynthesis, and also an awareness of the observing self or "I." He realizes that he himself is something different than all of these roles.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 74.

Upon reflection, many patients can recognize traits which they presently have belonging to preceding psychological ages. In this connection, Erikson's concept of the epigenesis of identity and the stages of the life cycle are extremely helpful.⁸

Assagioli has developed written questionnaires for his patients to complete which help him ascertain their underlying attitudes and personalities.⁹ These are helpful, and would be quite applicable in a pastoral counseling setting.

At the beginning of treatment, the therapist presents a diagrammatic model of the nature of man (previously shown in Chapter I of this dissertation). It is forwarded as a working hypothesis, and the Self is discussed and the experience of disidentification introduced to help the person experience the concept of Self. The term "soul" may be used for describing the higher Self to religious people; the term "higher center" is used with those of non-religious persuasions.

Next the *higher aspects* are evaluated. The super conscious often evidences itself in a person's world view or philosophy of life. This can be evoked by the "cosmic test."¹⁰ Here astronomical photographs are used to evoke a sense of the enormity of the universe. The patients' reactions are then noted. They are sometimes spontaneous and quite remarkable.

⁸Erik Erikson, *Identity: Youth in Crisis* (New York: Norton, 1968), pp. 91-141.

⁹Assagioli, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-84.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 89.

Following this exploration of the conscious aspects of the personality, comes the exploration of the unconscious. Already the process of developing in the patient a sense of his part as an observer of his own personality has begun. In the center, the observing "I" has begun to strengthen through that exercise.

Exploration of the Unconscious

Psychosynthesis uses a wide variety of psychoanalytic techniques in the exploration of the unconscious. Jung's Association Test, the exploration of dreams or the use of projective techniques are all appropriate. The Rorschach Test, the Thematic Apperception Test, the Szondi Test are among those mentioned. Assagioli notes that the TAT does not evoke the super conscious levels of the personality, and it is necessary to use other pictures to contact complexes at this level.¹¹

One tool particularly adapted to the psychosynthetic approach is that of Initiated Symbol Projection. ISP, developed by Dr. Hanscarl Leuner, is both a diagnostic and a therapeutic technique. Briefly, it consists of asking the patient to close his eyes and relax, then to visualize a standard series of twelve symbolic situations represented verbally by the therapist. The patient's reactions to these situations may be interpreted diagnostically, or may be, in themselves, therapeutic.¹²

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 95.

¹²Hanscarl Leuner, "Guided Affective Imagery, Method of Intensive Psychotherapy," *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, XXIII:L (January 1969), 4-22.

Through the technique of *free drawing*, the unconscious is enticed to express itself as well as being integrated in the process. The patient is asked to use different colored pencils allowing the pictures to emerge "automatically." A playful, expectant, curious mood is encouraged with no preconceptions about what is to appear. With regard to *hypnosis*, Assagioli sees many drawbacks including the encouragement of dissociation, and passive dependence on the therapist. He does not recommend using it except in the removal of some urgent symptoms.¹³

Assagioli is mindful of the many dangers in exploring the unconscious. He lists among them, the release of drives and emotions previously locked in the unconscious; increasing dissociation and encouraging a retrogressive trend to primitive stages; an excessive, morbid preoccupation with oneself; encouraging an inflow of psychic energy resulting in a sense of exultation. The dangers are seen as greater among those who are psychic, mystic, artistic, mediumistic and who depend upon the inspiration of the unconscious for creativity. *Psychosynthesis has a definite way of preventing some of these pathological reactions to the exploration of the unconscious.*

One of the most important concepts of psychosynthesis in regard to this area is that of *fractional analysis*. This involves the whole process of beginning with the conscious assessment first, enabling rapport between patient and therapist to develop, then proceeding to

¹³ Assagioli, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

the analysis in a *series of installments*. Part of a session is used with an unconscious exploratory technique. Then it is stopped and another conscious technique is used. The quantity of analysis is limited and energy released is immediately dealt with and controlled, transmuted or utilized through expressive techniques. A *total* exploration of the unconscious is not deemed necessary.

We think we can--as normal people generally do--put up with a certain amount of unanalyzed unconscious material, as long as it remains more or less quiet and does not interfere with normal life and normal activities. We do not aim at perfection in this respect, and this explains the paradox of the shorter time which psychosynthesis takes, compared with the classical psychoanalysis. Therefore, as we have found in practice, we can go as far as this; after a certain amount of analysis, sufficient for the immediate situation of the patient, we end it for the time being; and if something has remained in the unconscious which is really disturbing, it will give notice through *resistances* and through other symptoms in the course of the proceeding treatment. Then when the unconscious takes up the offensive, when it throws up resistance or symptoms, then we undertake another period of analysis to remove that difficulty or block. This sequence is repeated as circumstances necessitate, even towards the end of the therapy. We take the practical view: when the unconscious disturbs, it has to be dealt with; if it keeps quiet, we do not make a systematic offensive against it.¹⁴

This quotation gives an idea of the interplay between conscious, active techniques, and passive, unconscious exploratory psychoanalytic techniques, which characterizes the entire process of psychosynthesis.

The obvious touchstone between Christianity and this phase of psychosynthesis is the discipline of confession. Protestantism has been unsuccessful in replacing the confessional with a tool which enables people to creatively face themselves on a regular and ongoing

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 100.

basis, and the exploratory techniques suggested here could be quite helpful.

For those with proper training, the Initiated Symbol Projection technique brings a therapeutic as well as an analytic dimension to the confessional process.

The process is similar to the Ignatian approach to spiritual exercise, but has the added advantage of maintaining an ongoing existential posture towards the emerging contents of the unconscious, rather than imposing an outer evaluative attitude through suggestion.¹⁵

The ongoing and continual nature of confession is captured in the concept of *fractional analysis* in which provision is made for the planned combination of confession with active techniques. Rightly understood, penance is an active effort to positively correct an inappropriate and self-defeating personality trait, to enable greater openness to the Creator. This is the thrust of dis-identification and self-identification, and is directly strengthening of one's sense of being, even as the repetition of the Lord's prayer may be strengthening of one's sense of being by a process of reflection in that, in finding God, we must necessarily find ourselves.

Because our perceptions of self and God are distorted, self-conscious effort is necessary in working with our own distorted images. The process of facing these distorted perceptions and accompanying

¹⁵ Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (New York: Doubleday, 1964), pp. 42-200.

attitudes and feelings has been taken more seriously by Catholicism than Protestantism. It may be that the Protestant pastoral counselor may find a valuable tool in the exploratory techniques of psychosynthesis for removing blocks to personal growth.

CONTROL OF THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF THE PERSONALITY

At the outset, it is important to say a word or two about the attitude with which these active techniques are to be approached. The patient is encouraged to dis-identify, not only with his body, emotions, intellect, and imagination, but also with the active technique which he is presently seeking to perform. In this instance as well, he is to take the part of the observer, to see himself struggling with the active technique, *and to not take it too seriously*. Of great importance in this regard is a monography by Assagioli entitled *Smiling Wisdom*, in which he deals with the importance of humor in the whole process of psychotherapy.

To attain such a state of inner freedom, it is necessary to use humor first of all towards oneself, gently making fun of one's personal little self which is so full of its importance, giving itself such airs and taking itself so seriously, which is touchy, restless, suspicious.¹⁶

He makes a similar point in another monograph on the learning of languages.

Surely the time has come to abandon the stupid idea that study must always be accompanied by solemn and laborious drudgery. Let us turn it into a lively, attractive, happy

¹⁶Roberto Assagioli, *Smiling Wisdom* (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, n.d.), p. 7.

activity. Let us, for example, turn our attention to the possibility of introducing another influential factor; a general and vivid interest aroused by play and sport.¹⁷

This attitude of observation, disidentification, playfulness and expectation has a tendency to dispel the desperation and drudgery which so often accompany American self-help efforts. This attitude on the part of the psychotherapist tends to be contagious, and as he accepts the fumbling efforts and failures of the patient with equanimity, good humor, firmness, and confidence, the patient begins to change his attitude toward himself. The following techniques for controlling various aspects of the personality need to be seen in this light.

Catharsis

The technique of *catharsis*, much emphasized in a psychoanalytic treatment, is used in psychosynthesis to help dispose of the excessive energies in the unconscious. The emotional discharge involved is seen as the key aspect.

One cathartic technique involves *living it again*. Here the patient is asked to relax, close his eyes, and imagine re-living a traumatic situation. "Imagine that you are actually in the situation again--that you are again living the experience."¹⁸ Maximum usefulness is in the case of well-defined traumatic experience, or protracted emotional tension. It essentially removes symptoms rather than effecting

¹⁷Roberto Assagioli, *Psychological Method for Learning Languages* (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, n.d.), p. 7.

¹⁸Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis: A Manual*, p. 102.

actual cures. This technique can also be applied to future events of which the patient is afraid, as in the desensitization therapy of Wolpe.

Verbal expression may provide valuable catharsis. It is contraindicated in cases where no actual emotional discharge takes place, as in the case of hypochondriacs.¹⁹

In most cases where a strong resentment against another is held, the therapist may suggest a person give free expression of his feelings through *writing*.²⁰ The patient may write a letter, then burn the letter or give it to the therapist. The unconscious can be satisfied by the symbolic act and many emotional tensions relieved. The keeping of a *diary* is an extension of the use of writing to effect catharsis. This is especially effective if the diary is shared with the therapist, and has the added advantage of saving time.

Muscular discharge is particularly helpful in dealing with aggressive drives, and can also have a symbolic meaning which satisfies the unconscious, especially when the patient can be enabled to adopt an attitude of awareness and detachment, deliberateness and humor, towards his selected acts. Nevertheless, it can have serious drawbacks. An example is that for some people, the re-living of a traumatic scene, or the involvement in aggressive muscular discharge, may result in a kind of feedback effect, re-charging instead of discharging emotional tension. In such cases, it is best to suspend the exercise until the personality is better equipped to withstand deep digging analysis.²¹

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 103.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 104.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 106.

Critical Analysis

In order to help people deal with their impulsive acts, the practice of *critical analysis* is introduced. This is better described as impersonal observation.²² The technique stems from the awareness that there is a difference between repression and control.

A point that should be made very clear is that control of drives does not mean either their condemnation or their repression. It is a matter of necessary regulation. The energies have to be either expressed in a harmless way or whenever possible utilized for constructive ends, through canalization, transformation and sublimation. This is especially needed in the case of aggressive and sexual drives.²³

In this technique, the patient is asked to "insert" between impulse and action, a stage of reflection. If it seems wise to stem the impulse, he is to control it without repression. (This is critical.) Control implies neither fear nor condemnation, but expression in a harmless or useful way.

This is a delicate and important point, and one which it is worthwhile pondering and spending some time reflecting over. It is the confusion of precisely this distinction that produces so much emotional illness, and the therapist has to be quite careful in the exercise of the use of this technique. This gives rise to Assagioli's word of caution that anyone who is to practice psychosynthesis should

²²*Ibid.*, p. 107.

²³Roberto Assagioli, *Synthesis in Psychotherapy* (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 1964), pp. 2-3.

most assuredly be involved in it himself.²⁴

Christianity has long held that self control is an indispensable virtue for successful living. Recently the popular opposition to repression has blinded many people, including pastoral counselors, to the importance of distinguishing between control and repression. This is admittedly a difficult distinction to convey to a heavily repressed person, or one who is in full blown rebellion against repression. But it is, nevertheless, one which is neglected to the disservice of ourselves and those we seek to help.

The technique of critical analysis is indicated where there is an excess of emotional affective energies. As with every technique, this one can be used in an exaggerated or inopportune way. It may constitute a handicap or inhibition to action. It can develop an over-critical attitude, and foster criticism of other people. Therefore it must be adapted to real need and be used in strictly regulated and directive ways. The technique would be contraindicated with those individuals who are over-intellectualized, and particularly those who are basically extremely critical, for it would only intensify their unbalanced condition.

It is therefore important to warn people, particularly emotional types, not to make critical analysis a vehicle or screen for aggressive drives directed toward others. In addition many idealists who are so taken by their ideal of perfection that they almost become prisoners

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 9.

of it and demand perfection of themselves and others, and should be extremely careful in using this exercise. These people do not realize that between present conditions and the ideal goal there can and inevitably always will exist many intermediate steps, and that it is sufficient if they are able to take just the next step.

Assagioli notes that "The tension arising from the *vision of the future* in opposition to *present conditions* can be creative only if it is considered and utilized as a stimulus to action, and is something good and inevitable. . . . In practice there are two main methods which can be used: The first would be the reduction of the ideal to a more realistic and attainable one. This is the method that is usually advised. It presents, however, a certain degree of danger, which is the leveling off of the high ideal and therefore the reduction of the point of tension, and sometimes a prostitution of what was originally an idealistic goal to some now "pedestrian" materialistic aim. Therefore, the second way is preferable: to help the individual to define his ideal, no matter how high it is, but at the same time help him to arrive at some sub-goal or some idea that is more realizable, which the patient defines and crystalizes, and then eventually materializes. This can be done in a succession of steps. If, to start with, we make these steps small, close enough and easily attainable, the results give the patient a feeling of success and achievement, which has a very important reinforcing value, and to some extent eliminates and reduces the frustration."²⁵

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 110

Dis-Identification and Self-Identification

The conscious and purposeful use of this technique is basic to all psychosynthesis. It is based upon the principle, "We are dominated by everything with which our Self is identified. We can dominate and control everything from which we dis-identify ourselves."²⁶

Since I have described dis-identification in a previous section, I will not describe it now. Nonetheless, it is worth discussing its role in the therapeutic effort. All people have a self-identification, although few know what it is. Most people identify with one aspect of their self (a role, their emotions, or perhaps their physical beauty or prowess). This has serious consequences. First, the person does not really know or realize himself. Second, total identification with one aspect of the personality greatly diminishes contact with all of the others. Third, this state of affairs produces rigidity which life changes undermine, often producing disastrous crises, as suggested in the parable of Jesus about the farmer who gains economic wealth but loses his soul.²⁷

Self-identification is the inner experience of pure self-awareness, independent of any content of consciousness. This does not arise spontaneously, but it is the result of definite inner experimentation which is outlined in the exercise of dis-identification.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 111.

²⁷Luke 12:16-21.

The technique should be used as early in therapy as possible, since it facilitates other techniques of psychosynthesis. It is basic, not only to therapy, but to education, as an integrative and psychoprophylactic aid, against the constant stream of inner and outer influences seeking to demand identification from the "I." It should be performed a minimum of once per day.²⁸

The exercise is especially suited for people strongly linked with affective states, roles, ideas or plans, and people who are over-intellectualized. It enhances a sense of selfhood, a sense of being; and enables one to experience what existential analysts have talked about so much--and provided so few techniques for reaching--a sense of being, of a center within oneself, of an essence within oneself.²⁹ When this center is experienced, then it becomes possible to synthesize the different aspects from which one has dis-identified oneself.

The technique is contraindicated for patients who are already too prone to self-analysis, or are too much identified and fascinated with their inner world, and to whom the exercise would become an escape. Borderline cases and psychotics, especially who experience "depersonalization," i.e., who experience that their body does not belong to them, should use only the final affirmation, "I recognize and affirm that I am myself, a center of pure consciousness."

Assagioli notes that with patients who are fascinated and

²⁸ Assagioli, *Synthesis in Psychotherapy*, p. 120.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

satisfied with their inner world, "one could say that there is a subtle form of identification with the (inner) phenomena observed, or at least a strong link of the self with them. Therefore, the exercise should not be used except with the clear warning to the patient that its use must be specific, and must be limited to offsetting a subtle form of identification with his inner world. He must not over-emphasize it nor use it too frequently in comparison with the other techniques."³⁰

Among many Americans there is a great deal of resistance to the idea of dis-identifying oneself from one's body, feelings, and thoughts; and a deep fear of becoming split into different parts by so doing. On the other hand many patients like the idea of fully experiencing a center within themselves, a center from which they can find the strength and the wisdom to withstand the stresses of modern life.

In borderline cases great care is essential before considering attempting a psychosynthesis. In general such patients cannot be treated in the usual procedure of a regular psychosynthesis with the active cooperation of the patient in using the techniques. A psychotherapeutic technique of general validity, but which concerns particularly borderline cases and even psychotics, is that it is advisable to try to agree as much as possible with them, to accept as much as possible what they say or feel, and try only to show them the real meaning and purpose of what they say, i.e., to show it to them from a positive angle. For instance: if a patient says, "I feel I have no body, I

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 122.

feel there are no emotions in me," we reply "well, this is partially true; of course you are not your body and in this sense you have had an insight that generally people do not have, only you take it in the negative way instead of in a positive one. Practically speaking, you do have a body for while you deny having it you're actually using it in expressing your feelings through your larynx. Therefore, you see, this feeling of yours is just a subjective sensation. Of course you have a body as everyone else, only you have had a sudden insight that you are not your body. Therefore, take it in the sense that philosophically you are right, but pragmatically wrong." Assagioli reports that this type of approach has been successful in many cases, the key thought being not to immediately label the patient's assertion as a morbid symptom, but to seize on the morsel of truth which is really contained in his remarks, only misinterpreted and taken negatively by him, and proceed to reinterpret and expand it.

As the exercise of dis-identification proceeds and self-identity is strengthened, the will which is the central function of the Self, is strengthened as well. Thus, it appears that there is an overlap between many of the active techniques of psychosynthesis.

It is further worth noting that there is a connection between the cathartic techniques of psychosynthesis, and the practice of confession in the Christian Church. In Christian worship, this is normally accompanied by a bidding to center one's attention on God, and by a process of reflexion, upon one's own being. This ongoing alternation of confession and adoration is comparable to the psycho-

synthetic practice of fractional analysis in which there is an alternation between catharsis and self-identification.

Will Training

Rollo May writes that one of Sigmund Freud's contributions, if not his greatest, lay in his cutting through the futility and self-defeat in Victorian "willpower." "Under his penetrating analysis, Victorian 'will' did, indeed, turn out to be a web of rationalization and self-deceit."³¹ Assagioli is in essential agreement with May on this point. However, both of them agree that the Will cannot thus be lightly dismissed. May writes that it becomes apparent in the phenomenon of "intentionality." "It is in intentionality and will that the human being experiences his identity. 'I' is the 'I' of 'I can.'"³² When the will is connected with unconscious drives and complexes, then the self-effort takes on the Victorian caste. But when will training follows the exploration of the unconscious, and self-identification, then it can be employed in skillful relation to the unconscious and the imagination.

Even when there is a minimum of self-consciousness, people can be taught to employ the will in dealing with threatening sensations and experiences which seem intolerable and uncontrollable. This approach has been developed thoroughly by Abraham A. Lowe and his

³¹Rollo May, *Love and Will* (New York: Norton, 1969), pp. 182-183.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 243.

self-help system of psychotherapy as practiced by Recovery, Inc. In this process, discharged mental patients are enabled to endure symptoms of anxiety and intense fatigue and irritation which often accompany their release from a mental hospital. The Recovery motto is that sensations are distressing but not dangerous.³³ The will enables the patient to say "Yes" I can endure these symptoms, or "No" I can't endure these symptoms.

Assagioli has made a real contribution to psychology in his careful analysis of the stages of the will. In the training of the will he is concerned with the complete volition, the training of the will in all its phases. These are as follows:

The first stage involves *purpose and deliberation*. In deciding on the purpose or direction in which the Self seeks expression, the question of value is inescapable. Deliberation follows in which the person must consider not only what is the best, but what is attainable.

Stage two deals with *decision*. In deciding between many possibilities, the reality principle that one cannot have all, but must choose between alternatives, is encountered. We are faced with the necessity to prefer one option over another.

Stage three involves *affirmation*. The act of affirmation consists of a command or declaration made to oneself, through such words as "let it be." The intensity of the affirmation determines the degree and the extent of its effectiveness.

³³Abraham A. Lowe, *Mental Health Through Will Training* (Boston: Christopher, 1967), p. 133.

Stage four deals with *planning*. This is the organizing of activities according to a clearly outlined program. Care must be taken to neither focus on the ultimate goal so exclusively so as to become impractical, nor to focus on the means so exclusively as to lose track of the goal.

Stage five deals with *execution*. The qualities necessary here are the dynamic, focused, driving power of the will, functioning by fiat, and the persistent, enduring aspect of the will.

These five aspects of the will are to be balanced and integrated in the person. But before training may proceed the person needs to be motivated.

The first condition for attaining a strong will is an earnest desire to do so. This need not be great but if it is weak, the mobilizing of energies must be the first step. Assagioli recommends an exercise in which the person visualizes himself first suffering the consequences of a weak will, and secondly, reaping the rewards of a strong will, and finally, picturing himself possessed of a strong, persistent will. He also encourages reading biographies of men of strong, constructive wills.

Once the energies have been mobilized, useless exercises having no utility except the development of the will, are to be performed. Daily life is to be examined for its many opportunities for training the will. Arising at a definite time, dressing rapidly and with precision, yet without haste, are two examples. To make haste slowly involves acting while simultaneously looking on as an observer of one's

actions. This effort is strengthening of both the will and the sense of being. Work, frustration in the home, and inconvenience, all offer opportunity for "self-recollectedness" and the chance to make choices of creative response. From this point of view, every enemy becomes an ally in the development of the will. In addition to this, physical exercises calling for calmness, dexterity and courage are also beneficial.

In helping people persist in doing the exercises, it is helpful to engage the cooperation of other drives. Especially effective is the instinct to play, to make a game of it, and thus, to entertain one's own unconscious in the process.³⁴

Contraindications

The fundamental problem in will training is achieving an equilibrium between the different aspects of the will. For example, the first stage of developing purpose and deliberation is often weak. Also, there is often a strong personal will at the disposal of the predominant drive. The technique to be used here is to make the patient conscious of the drawbacks of this situation and the benefits of having an integrated will. The fourth phase of planning and organizing may also be lacking in people who use the dynamic will well. This is corrected by the therapist thinking through, with the person, the steps towards the final goal. With depressed people, emphasis on the

³⁴Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis: A Manual*, p. 137.

decisive aspect of the will is best left until the depression lifts, or the therapist may make decisions with them to avoid undue pressure.

Some people have an over-developed will to dominate other people, or have an over-developed dynamic aspect of the will. These factors must be considered in will training and can be offset by cultivating all phases of the will harmoniously, developing higher human functions, (such as a sense of justice or compassion) and finally, by awakening the function of the spiritual will.

The development of a balanced and integrated will, a concept central to both Christianity and psychosynthesis, has received little support from dynamic psychology. But the necessity of managing selfishness in its negative meaning, is becoming desperately important for our heavily populated world.

Assagioli suggests that the *will-to-understand* may be strengthened, and its twin virtue, *empathy*, consciously developed. Empathy, the imaginative projection of one's own consciousness into another being, brings us into a working relationship with our "competitors."³⁵

Finally, further harmonization of our will with those of others comes through relating the personal Self and Higher Self. Meditations on the galaxies and exercises in spiritual psychosynthesis are helpful here.³⁶

³⁵Roberto Assagioli, *The Training of the Will* (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 1966), pp. 19-20.

³⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

One cannot help being struck by the words of the Lord's prayer, "Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven," and the similar emphasis of psychosynthesis. In a world pressing in upon itself as ours is, some such understanding is imperative to render creative the inevitable conflict of autonomous wills.

The will is inevitably enlisted in the active performance of all the other techniques of psychosynthesis. The integration of will and imagination, for example, is accomplished in the persistent visualization of fixed symbols. This, in fact, is one of the most effective techniques of psychosynthesis and it is to this topic that I now turn.

Training the Imagination

Imagination functions simultaneously at the level of sensation, feeling, thinking, and intuition, as well as involving visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic images. As such, it is truly a synthesizing function. The immense power of psychic images operates on the law that "images and mental pictures tend to produce the physical conditions and external acts corresponding to them."³⁷ This whole trend of thought indicates the intimate interrelationship between the will and the imagination, and highlights the need for skillful integration of the two.

This whole issue of the synthesis of the imagination and the will is of critical importance for pastoral counseling. Roman Catholic

³⁷ Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis: A Manual*, p. 144.

spiritual guides have long known that those who embark upon a path of spiritual development encounter inner images which they do not consciously will to evoke. Assagioli notes that in practice the real issue is between the will and the imagination, and that when the will and the imagination come into conflict, the imagination wins.³⁸ Thus, the whole task of dis-identifying oneself from one's imagination, in order to gain some measure of control over it is no small thing. Only then can a person become existentially aware that he attributes meaning to the images. From the vantage point of the self, it becomes apparent that the will is very much involved in how the total organism responds to the imagination. But for most people caught up in their own mind-stream and identified with it, that truth is not readily apparent. For this reason the psychosynthetic techniques for training and using the imagination creatively are extremely important.

They are also relevant to pastoral counseling. The New Testament is replete with experiences of both the divine and the demonic. These experiences have inner origins which may also spill out into historical actuality. (This was outlined in my section on Mythology in Chapter II, Section I.) Jesus did not urge people toward virtue without providing them with potent and creative inner imagery to support them. We as pastoral counselors need to do likewise.

Because symbols often provide the bridge between the personal and spiritual psychosynthesis, I will deal here briefly with the

³⁸*Ibid.*

training of the imagination and then more extensively in my chapter on spiritual psychosynthesis.

A simple exercise for the training of the imagination is asking the patient to imagine a blackboard on which an increasing number of digits are written, until the person can no longer hold the visualization. In most cases, the initial response is awareness of the weakness of the imagination and the inability of the will to control it. A number of diagnostic conclusions can be drawn from the exercise. Most important, the practice is therapeutic and improvement can be easily measured in terms of increased numbers visualized.

An exercise in mental photography strengthens the function of memorization and observation through the effort to observe a picture or complex chemical formula and reproduce it in visual imagination. These activities train the imagination and control it without suppressing it. It can be combined with more complex exercises and symbolic visualization.

Contraindications

The main contraindications which Assagioli lists involve an exaggerated interest in the technique itself without making use of it for the purpose of psychosynthesis. "For example, a certain obsessive compulsive individual will sometimes use, or rather misuse, this technique and make of it a ritual which continues to utilize his chronic symptomology."³⁹

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 151.

He goes on to say that the visualization of certain geometric forms (which theoretically should reinforce the ritualistic tendency of some accepted compulsives) in some cases have the opposite effect, because it is a method of substitution. It replaces an egocentric emotion with an impersonal objective goal and is, so to speak, a case of therapeutic substitution. The key is not to let the substitution become another symptom.

Auditory Evocation

Another technique useful for developing "I"--consciousness, is the technique of *auditory evocation*. The patient is asked to evoke sounds of nature such as waves, or waterfalls, then to simultaneously evoke or exclude visual images of the same. This effort strengthens the will, and develops control over a wide range of inner phenomena. Man-made auditory images, particularly the sounds of various musical instruments may be similarly used. In this way, auditory sensitivity is both developed and controlled. The patient also learns to exclude noises from consciousness in this way, a technique extremely important in modern society.⁴⁰

Another technique is that of auditory registration, in which a short musical composition is played, and the patient is asked to hear it again in imagination. The re-integration of emotions experienced at the initial hearing is accomplished in this way.⁴¹

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

In the Christian tradition, we encounter many people who have had in the past profound spiritual experiences through music. Many of these occurred in simple circumstances, and yet have the effect of conveying ineffable meaning to the hearer. These may be evoked in times of crisis and provide a powerful resource, motivating the person to shake off despair and rise to new heights.

In his section on music, Assagioli quotes Georges Duhamel, who reflected on a humble musical experience he had during World War I, as an Army surgeon.

When I happen to ponder upon music . . . I often evoke certain days of the year 1915. During my hours of rest, in the evening I drank deeply of the humble song I played on the flute. I was still very unskilled, but I kept at it, closing my lips tightly and measuring my breath. By and by my most painful thoughts went to sleep. My body which had been completely occupied with the effort of enlivening the magic tune, became lost to thought. My soul purged of its miseries, relieved, freed from all anguish, rose lightly, in luminous serenity. . . . I *began to grasp that music would permit me to live* (italics mine). It could certainly not diminish the horror of the massacre, the suffering, the agony; yet it brought to me, at the very center of the carnage, a breath of divine remission, a principle of hope and salvation. For a man deprived of the consolations of faith, music was nevertheless a kind of faith, that is to say, something that upholds, re-unites, revives, comforts. I was no longer forsaken. A voice had been given to me, with which to call, to complain, to laud, and to pray.⁴²

In the history of the Christian church, many feel that the hymns of the Wesleyan revival were much more effective than the sermons. Through the experiences of auditory evocation and registration, one can enable people to recapture powerful emotional experiences from the past,

⁴² Georges Duhamel, *La Musique Consolatrice*, quoted in Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis: A Manual*, p. 258.

and to find meaning in the present through them. Patients in which sub-personalities are autonomous enough to issue in "inner voices" should not use this technique. In such cases the patient's attention should be deflected from all kinds of inner listening or auditory evocation; and even from outer listening. His attention should be directed to the outer world through the other senses, particularly sight, in addition to touch, taste, and smell.

Kinesthetic, tactile, gustatory and olfactory senses may be evoked in useful preparation for all exercises connected with biopsychosynthesis.⁴³ The last three senses are weaker than kinesthetic images, and are best evoked by having the patient touch, for instance, a piece of fur, then reproduce the image immediately afterward, until he can evoke it at will.⁴⁴ Kinesthetic images are very important for exercises in relaxation of the body. The value of this re-integration of sensations of the body into consciousness lies in the fact that it is done "from above," by the personal self who deliberately and actively assumes control, instead of being identified with the body, and thus, driven.

There is a definite contraindication which should be taken into serious consideration. It concerns all those who already have a tendency to pay excessive attention to their physical sensations and

⁴³Roberto Assagioli, *Psychosomatic Medicine: Biopsychosynthesis* (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 1967), p. 9.

⁴⁴Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis: A Manual*, p. 159.

consider them interesting or important, and who consequently would respond in the same way in their imaginary evocation. The more pronounced type, or rather class, of these people are the hypochondriacs. The same contraindication is involved in the use of "autogene training" of Schultz and Luthe because it tends to emphasize physical sensations too much, and in that sense may even become harmful.

"Therefore, one should, in using these techniques, keep clearly in view their limited applications; and that it is within the power of the self to evoke or dismiss at will images of every type of sensation. Then their use is constructive; but they should be limited as to the time spent on them, for they are after all secondary techniques, observant to and useful for psychosynthetic exercises, and in themselves alone have no real value."⁴⁵

REALIZATION OF ONE'S TRUE SELF

The dawning awareness of one's true self may be sudden or gradual. If it takes place suddenly in a flash of illumination, the implications of that powerful truth must be gradually worked out. Old patterns of false identification especially with emotional states must be patiently worked through.

On the other hand, the awareness of the self may take place gradually through the continual practice of the techniques of personal psychosynthesis heretofore explained. Either way the sense of being

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 162.

attained becomes a powerful resource in the further growth of the person.

This is not an experience which occurs at a point in time during the course of therapy, and is then set aside. It is an ongoing unfoldment which is not completed in a lifetime, rather participates in a seemingly limitless process of ever-heightened and ever-widening consciousness.

It has become apparent by now that it is the purpose of psychosynthesis to enable the human being to engage all of his functions and to utilize them for his own fulfillment. This is a kindly and beneficent view, admitting the necessity of discipline, but rejecting gaunt asceticism. It is a hope and an expectation which a good father might hold for his children. If I may re-introduce the concept of God as forwarded by Jesus, that he is a good Father, a re-reading of the New Testament with this fact in mind might prove a fruitful exercise for recapturing rejected resources for spiritual growth and development.

PSYCHOSYNTHESIS: THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE PERSONALITY AROUND A NEW CENTER

Plan of the Psychosynthesis

After the assessment of the conscious aspects of the personality, the exploration of the unconscious, and after the use of some techniques, such as will training, self-identification, and visualization, there comes a time for definitely planning the level of psychosynthesis to be achieved.

This will involve a plan, first for the therapist, and secondarily, a plan of varying completeness, presented to the patient himself. Of central importance is consideration of the capacity of the patient to benefit from therapy. According to the plan, the patient will be taught techniques of psychosynthesis and induced to use them independently as much as possible so that his psychosynthesis can be ongoing after his departure from therapy. The overall plan is, of course, subject to change at any point along the way.

Ideal Models

In this process of planning, *the technique of ideal models* is used.⁴⁶ The purpose of utilizing this technique is to enlist the plastic, creative power of images, which we examined in dealing with visualization. In therapy, it is a process of substituting an attainable model for those already existing in the subject. This technique is based on the concept that every movement requires a previous image of the movement to be executed.⁴⁷ Therefore, a person desiring to move himself in any given direction may do so by presenting himself with an ideal model that offers a motive drive in that direction.

It is recognized that all people have various self models, often in constant conflict with one another. At the outset, the patient is made aware of these conflicting models. This brings us to

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 166.

⁴⁷Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis: A Manual*, p. 145.

one of the deeper aspects of analysis. The most profound material of psychoanalysis is not traumas and incidents of the past, but the dramatic existential situation of the present. As the negative self-images or models are exposed by analysis, we have the opportunity of substituting creative models. (The word "ideal models" as it is used by Assagioli needs to be distinguished sharply from the notion of "idealized" self images in the language of Karen Horney. The latter are impractical, unreal, and are rationalized covers for destructive, negative self-images.)

There is actually no single "ideal" model, but several. One of the most common is that of an external or indirect model. The therapist often provides this, and his influence can be used destructively or constructively. Passive imitations on the part of the patient as well as ongoing personal attachments to the human representative of the model are to be avoided. Rather, the process of introjection should take place in order to dissolve the affective bond with the model inspirer, and to have the model become a dynamic, inner creative pattern.

The first step in this process involves the active debunking by the therapist of unworthy models. For example, the young man whose ideal model is a movie star must be faced with the shortcomings of his chosen ideal. The next step is that of the patient visualizing himself as possessing the qualities which it is good or necessary to develop and to build in to himself. He is asked to visualize himself in possession of that particular quality or actively using that psychological

function which it is needful to develop. The effect becomes a psychodrama play-technique in imagination.⁴⁸ The technique is usually carried out by the therapist describing first a goal, and then entering into a collaboration with the patient in affirming or re-defining the goal and completing the general plan more concretely. This may be done with the eyes closed, and with an emphasis upon the vividness and intensity of the visual evocation, and not on the length of experience. Once the ideal model has been worked through in imagination, the next step is encouraging the patient to try it out in the real world. He is encouraged to approach the effort with an experimental, detached attitude and, if possible, a playful attitude so that he can focus his fullest attention on the experiment and not on the practical results. This enables him to repeat the trial without undue discouragement.

The danger in the use of ideal models is that it may induce repression. For instance, a student before an examination where the emotion and anxiety is intense would not be able to visualize over and over again perfect behavior in the given situation without repressing fear and anxiety. When this is the case, the patient has to visualize himself in a given situation and then if emotions or fear or anger come up, the patient tries not to fight them. This is the point: not to fight them, but to be permissive, to accept and to experience them, taking upon himself the role of the observer as he experiences himself having these feelings. This is done repeatedly until there is a

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 170.

spontaneous freeing of the "psychological allergy."⁴⁹ When, through this process, the patient finds himself freed of negative emotions, he is then free to perform effectively the techniques of the ideal model.

In the Christian church we have at hand a continual presentation of the ideal model of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, we find people anxiously striving to imitate him or else feeling guilt over their failures to conform to His image. The above mentioned technique of enabling people to feel their true feelings, to experience their feelings of anxiety and discomfort over their shortcomings, and to gradually accept them, and thus be free from them, could have extremely wide application in a Christian context.

The above is evidence of one of the essential procedures of general psychosynthesis: that is, a right succession and combination of all that is best from psychoanalytic procedure with the best of the active techniques. The important point is that need to deal in imagination with the negative aspect of the individual before we can fully impress the progressive desired good, even though the desired good may be in mind before the negative aspects are brought up into consciousness. Many patients, when asked to visualize themselves having a positive side, perform the ideal model exercise a time or two and then give it up. When this happens it indicates that there are certain forces running counter to the constructive forces and these resistances need to be dealt with in an analytic fashion.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 174.

Conclusion

Psychosynthesis has been described thus far as employing analytical and active techniques in a process of fractional analysis to dissolve resistances, foster the experience of one's being through identification with the personal Self, and for the purpose of reorganizing the personality around the new center through the systematic use of ideal models. An effort has been made to point out the relevance of these techniques to the Christian faith. The unique contribution of psychosynthesis is seen as the presentation of a variety of ways in which active techniques can be utilized at a level of positive depth.

CHAPTER V

SPIRITUAL PSYCHOSYNTHESIS

In a sense it would be appropriate to say that the entire content of the chapter on personal psychosynthesis was dealing with spiritual matters. For the discovery of one's personal self reveals that man is always more than his surroundings, or even his inner environment. It reveals that he attributes meaning and value to his inner experiences and thus, always has a choice as to how he will respond to them. In this sense then, it is accurate to describe the subject matter of the last chapter as spiritual.

In addition, however, there is the occasional powerful and direct experience of the infusion of meaning from beyond, an experience which leaves a person overwhelmed with the certainty that *all* of life is profoundly important and profoundly meaningful. These numinous experiences may have their precipitation in a word from a friend, or from a deep dream. But alike, they must be described as spiritual, and often have the effect of permeating the most pedestrian of experiences with their numinosity. Rudolph Otto has presented a most thorough examination of this phenomenon.¹

That these experiences may be evoked or at least encouraged, is one of the most important contributions of psychosynthesis. How

¹Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 12-30.

these experiences are evoked, and what their effects are, form the content of this chapter.

Many of the techniques involved are applicable to personal psychosynthesis and the reverse is also true. No effort will be made to distinguish radically between either the two techniques or the two phenomena.

Symbol Utilization

The approach of spiritual psychosynthesis is essentially a symbolic one. Symbols, in addition to being accumulators, transformers, and conductors of psychological energy, are also bearers of meaning. As such they have extremely important and useful therapeutic and educational functions. Part of the rationale of symbol utilization is to revive symbols and to evoke their meaning. Another aspect of symbol utilization is the effect of symbols upon the unconscious. Symbols can be actively visualized, setting in motion unconscious psychological processes which effect the transformation of the unconscious. In addition to integrating the unconscious itself, symbols achieve a further integration between the conscious and unconscious elements of the personality.²

In his approach to symbol utilization, Assagioli follows the highest and best in both science and religion, maintaining the stance of spiritual existence toward the symbolic process. This means that

²Roberto Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis: A Manual of Principles and Techniques* (New York: Hobbs, Dorman, 1965), p. 180.

the personal self transcends the symbolic process, the consequent feelings and ego states, evoked by inner imagery, and continues to focus upon and press toward the Higher Self as its center of existence. This is a simultaneous upward and inward process as well as an outer thrust to contact the Higher Self in other people, very much like Christ's commandment to love God, and neighbor as self.

The Religious Point of View

The Christian church has, for thousands of years, utilized symbols in worship and in the activity of prayer. The point of intersection between symbol utilization and prayer is that of selective attention. In selective attention, the subject focuses on something, either an external object or an internal mental image, and all other stimuli, both external and internal, are pushed to the periphery of awareness.

Of critical importance is the selection of objects and images which are of a creative nature and foster openness to the creative processes of God and His universe. By virtue of their form or by virtue of some symbolic and affective meaning attached to them, some symbols take on great value, either of a positive or negative sort. When the organism presents itself with these images, psychological and physiological states are evoked, and the organism is placed in a state of relative openness or closedness to the creative process. Underhill has written:

By false desires and false thoughts, man has built up for himself a false universe: as a mollusk, by the deliberate and persistent absorption of lime and rejection of all else, can build up for itself a hard shell which shuts it from the external world, and only represents in a distorted and unrecognizable form, the ocean from which it was obtained. This hard and wholly unnutritious shell, this one-sided secretion of the surface consciousness, makes, as it were, a little cave of illusion for each separate soul.³

If it is true that man, by selective attention, can isolate himself from creative processes, it is even more true that by selective attention he can put himself in touch with the activity of God in the universe.

The religions of the world are a fruitful source of symbols which, when concentrated upon, place us in states of life awareness and receptivity. In addition, the secular world has many images which are helpful. I visualize these images as being arranged in a circular fashion around a center, the center being the point of optimum effectiveness. For the Christian church, the central image has been Jesus Christ. Selective attention upon Him has brought life. He has been, as it were, a window through which life itself shines. Assagioli makes note of this in his chapter on Spiritual Psychosynthesis.⁴

Among other helpful creative images in the Christian tradition are certain geometric forms which have been attended to with good results. Among these which appear both in the literature of Christianity and psychosynthesis are the circle, the cross and the

³Evelyn Underhill, quoted by John B. Magee, *Reality and Prayer* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), p. 56.

⁴Assagioli, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

triangle.⁵

My own experience with these symbols has been very helpful, and involves the visualization of these symbols for about fifteen minutes daily over a period of nine months to a year. The symbol is drawn on a card which is looked at until the image is fixed in one's mind. Then, the eyes are closed, the symbol is held in imaginative awareness for as long as possible. When it is lost, the card is referred to again and the process is repeated. The ability to concentrate increases week by week, and if the program is followed through to the end, the capacity to concentrate somehow is not lost. Subjective experience is one of a gradual calming, focusedness, and increasing self-confidence. Assagioli lists the visualization of such symbols as being a primary technique for spiritual psychosynthesis.⁶ My own experience with this discipline included a profound experience of Higher Self in which, as I was visualizing the cross, the figure spontaneously became brighter and brighter until it radiated in all four directions, and an overwhelming sense of the unity of all seemingly oppositional values became intuitively apparent. Justice and mercy, predestination and free will, life and death, and a whole host of other categories too numerous to mention, exploded upon my consciousness and seemed to resolve in the immediate presence of Love. This experience was and is beyond my powers of description, but I have never forgotten it, and I believe it affects

⁵Robert Gerard, *Psychosynthesis: A Psychotherapy for the Whole Man* (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 1964), p. 12.

⁶Assagioli, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

my life to this day.

Another image from the Judeo-Christian tradition is that of the burning bush accompanied by an auditory revelation of God who declares that He is to be called, "I Am That I Am."⁷ Jesus identifies with the burning bush by saying to the Pharisees, "Before Abraham was, I Am."⁸ He identifies Himself with Being and encourages us to do likewise.

The acceptance and affirmation of one's being, once again, has a profound effect upon the total organism. This is scientifically demonstrated in the autogenic training of Schultz and Luthe, which presupposes a functional passivity toward the intended outcome of concentrated activity. Their method *focuses on what is*. Because this is a basic technique of psychosynthesis and an extremely important technique for pastoral counseling and for the preparation of Christian prayer, it is worth describing this technique in some detail.

From their studies, Schultz and Luthe discovered that muscular relaxation ("heaviness") and vaso-relaxation ("warmth") are basic factors in bringing about a state of heightened attention. They then found out that the psycho-physiological mechanisms which are responsible for heaviness and warmth could be mobilized by auto-suggestion, and that by focusing upon members of the body and suggesting heaviness and warmth, a state of amplified relaxation similar to the hypnotic state could be induced.

⁷Exodus 3:14.

⁸John 8:58.

Autogenic training involves a series of exercises organized around six physiologically oriented steps.⁹ The steps are: focusing on heaviness and warmth in the extremities, regulating the cardiac activity and respiration, focusing on abdominal warmth and cooling of the forehead. The patient is asked to sit in a relaxed position, in an environment with reduced external stimuli. He then concentrates on the suggested statement, "my arm is heavy." This formula is repeated for a graduated period of time, from a few seconds to a few minutes, and applied to all the limbs and above-listed organs of the body. This is done for a few minutes two or three times a day for a period of several months. For more experienced trainees there is a series of meditative exercises on color, concrete objects, abstract objects such as justice or freedom, selected states, feelings, other persons, and answers to specific problems from the unconscious.

The power of the mental image, "my right arm is warm," is surprisingly great. In some cases the standard formula may be enough to cause strong vasomotor reactions, like swelling, disagreeable pulsating, pressure in the training limb, or in certain isolated regions of it. In such cases, the physiological effect may be reduced by changing the formula to, "my right arm is slightly warm."

The mental activity applied during autogenic training exercises is conceived of as "passive" concentration and may be explained in contrast to what is usually called "active" concentration. Active

⁹ Johannes H. Schultz and Wolfgang Luthe, *Autogenic Training* (New York: Grune and Stratton, 1959), p. ix.

concentration implies mental focusing with an active goal directed investment in mental energy and will power, which implies an active effort of the person toward the intended functional result. Autogenic training presupposes a functional passivity toward the intended outcome of the concentrated activity. The verbal formula, "my arm or leg *is* heavy," is structured to emphasize that something is going on, whether the person does anything or not.

This returns us to the image of the burning bush and the affirmation, "I Am That I Am." Both words; "is" (my arm *is* . . .) and "I am," are cognates of the verb "to be," and are experientially related to the phenomenon of being--thus the exercise *begins to suggest and put us in touch with the Higher Self, that causative given which is functional, willing, purposive, and intentional, whether we are aware of it or not.*

In discussing these exercises of Schultz and Luthe in his section on personal psychosynthesis, Assagioli notes that autogenic training along with other exercises that call attention to physical sensation, may be contraindicated for hypochondriacs and "micro-hypochondriacs." Likewise he notes that for people whose sub-personalities are autonomous enough to issue in "inner voices" the use of auditory evocation is contraindicated. The same cautions apply to these exercises as they are integrated into the practice of spiritual psychosynthesis and caution is recommended. With that in mind we may proceed.

The warmth and heaviness exercises of autogenic training, are suggested as preparation for meditations in spiritual psychosynthesis.

These meditations are adaptations of various symbol utilizing techniques and vary on a continuum from controlled visualization of specific symbols to visualization of spontaneous images emerging in the patient's consciousness, such as suggested by Ira Progoff.

For purposes of discussion, I shall limit myself to an intermediary technique in which the beginning of the meditation is controlled by the therapist who suggests a beginning symbolic scene, from which the patient freely proceeds.

Robert Gerard¹⁰ suggests three methods of symbol utilization for spiritual psychosynthesis. They are: the guided daydream technique of DeSoille; the technique of light; and the technique of inner dialogue. I shall deal with these in order.

The Guided Daydream

DeSoille describes his technique as follows:

We give the patient a starting image, for example, a sword, or possibly a seashore where the water is very deep. We have him describe this image as thoroughly as possible, and ask him questions so as to evoke details. If necessary . . . during the course of this first session it may be necessary at times to remind the subject that in a dream anything is possible.

Here we come to that special factor which makes for the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the directed daydream. The patient's imaginary movement in space is guided by the psychologist. This movement takes place primarily in the vertical dimension, as ascent or descent.

Through this operation we discover a basic law of the mind: although ascension is often difficult at first, in subsequent

¹⁰Gerard, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

session, he brings on images which become increasingly constructive and which express a sense of calm, of serenity,--and ultimately, of joy--in effect, the open and generous feelings. On the other hand, to image a descent evokes increasingly somber images, which may be unpleasant and even quite distressing.¹¹

It is valuable to note the connection between the psychic experience of ascending, with light on the one hand; and between the psychic experience of descending, with darkness on the other hand. It is also of the utmost importance to state that when a person has become fully relaxed, and is able to enter into the visualization with optimum subjectivity, the inner psychic experience is direct and very real, evoking somatic responses, such as perspiration and increased or decreased pulse rate. (Morton Kelsey indicates that mythology represents an inner reality which is experienced directly by those who are open to that reality. In such a setting, the banal, didactic allegories of the intellect are transformed into spontaneous and powerful "mythic" images.) On some occasions the image of light spontaneously appears under these circumstances. In other instances, it can be skillfully introduced to help resolve a difficult visualized situation.

DeSoille, in one of his exercises, asks his patient to describe an imaginary landscape and to start climbing one of the mountains. He then shepherds the person past obstacles and over difficult terrain, until he arrives at the top of the mountain. After reminding the person that in a dream anything is possible, he then asks him to imagine a pathway of clouds rising up into space from his present location on

¹¹Robert DeSoille, *The Directed Daydream* (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 1966), p. 1.

the top of the mountain. In difficult situations he suggests that the patient imagine that someone is coming from above in order to lend a hand. (At which point angels are often imagined.)¹² In Assagioli's frame of reference, this would be an image from the superconscious and would precede an experience with the Higher Self.

Many people, upon emerging from the clouds, visualize the sun shining and can be encouraged to rise up and move toward the light and even to merge with it and become one with it. This phenomenon is often accompanied with deep feelings of warmth, strength and well being. It seems to me that Assagioli would probably call this an experience of symbolic identification with the Higher Self.

In his visualization of ascent, DeSoille asks the patient to imagine a shore or a rocky coast where the water is very deep. He then suggests scuba gear and asks the person to dive into the water, descending as deeply as possible, describing in detail what he sees in his mind's eye. Quite often feelings of fear arise and sometimes threatening images such as an octopus appear. At this point the patient may be encouraged to detain the animal with a magic wand.¹³

The Technique of Light

When the person becomes extremely fearful or unable to find anything in the depths of the sea or is unwilling to move and explore, the introduction of a torch or a flashlight by the therapist results

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 6.

in the resumption of exploration and a discovery of a variety of images. Until the light is introduced, persons tend to remain repressed, the images tend to remain repressed from conscious awareness, hidden and exerting a threatening influence which could not be coped with.¹⁴

Light is used to generate a process of gradual contact and identification with an inner light of understanding and insight.

During this process the issue of faith or confidence and trust in the creative and life-giving images is a constant issue. Some patients, for instance, are able to visualize the darkness and threatening images with ease, confidence, and what approaches enjoyment. However, the introduction of an image which will help them out of a dilemma is regarded with suspicion and is often labeled "wishful thinking." Here the choice of the "bad" as being more real than the "good" is clearly seen. Since the whole process is an imaginative one, the resolution of this argument involves the introduction of philosophical and theological speculation. It is, however, important to note here that the commitment of the therapist is a decisive factor.

Dr. Wolfgang Kretschmer comments that, "The psychotherapist who wants to employ techniques of meditation must first be able to meditate himself."¹⁵

Kretschmer indicates the tremendous influence the psychic field

¹⁴Gerard, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

¹⁵Wolfgang Kretschmer, Jr., "Meditative Techniques in Psychotherapy," *Zeitschrift für Psychotherapie und medizinische Psychologie*, I:3 (May 1951), 1.

of the therapist asserts on the person during the meditation. The therapist's own confidence in the ultimate creativity of the symbolic process strongly affects the capacity of the patient to trust his own creative images.

One could say that the therapist must meditate on the patient. This is the mystical unity between the therapist and the sick. One must not only analyze the illness, but also know the possible health. The therapist must have before him the conception of the completely harmonic man and seek where he can find it again to develop it.¹⁶

It is obvious in all of this that the mythic structures of existence inherent not only in the formal philosophy, but also in the inner life commitment of the therapist, is critically important.

Gerard, in a case study of symbolic visualization and spiritual experience, describes an experience of the patient who swims deep into the ocean and encounters light at the bottom.

The session is particularly interesting for this reason: many metaphysically inclined individuals believe that it is only possible to have spiritual experiences by going up; this is a person who had a spiritual experience by going down. In many of my patients (and in many individuals, whether they are patients or not), the spiritual experience takes the form of contacting some kind of light. When this symbolic realization technique of ascent or descent is used, a different kind of light is contacted on the way down than on the way up. In general, the light experienced on the way down gives the impression of a very basic, undifferentiated, pure energy of the universe, neither good nor evil, which can be used in either way. The light contacted on the way up impresses the subject as being essentially spiritual (not that the other is not ('spiritual'): a constructive energy often associated with feelings of altruistic love, understanding and wisdom. In some cases, the individual contacts a light on the way down, and one

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 7.

on the way up and is eventually able to fuse the two in one synthesis, both lights, representing the integration of his material and spiritual nature in one harmonic whole, as an integral part of the universe, which is what eventually needs to be experienced.¹⁷

Before reaching the light, the patient visualized himself swimming with an aqua lung down through the ocean. He reached a level, first where he could see quite clearly, then where it was quite dark and much colder. At this point the therapist suggested that he had a light on his forehead enabling him to see, and encouraged him to keep going down even further. The patient swam through layers of muck, ooze, slime, formless creatures like fish and snakes, protoplasmic development which suggested to him the beginning of life and at each stage was encouraged to go deeper by the therapist. He reached a formless mass of almost jelly-like consistency and was encouraged to go deeper even yet. Finally, he approaches a lighted dome, enters into it, contacts a series of wraith-like vapors which evoke profound feelings in him, and finally encounters a yellow-white incandescence which fills him with awe. The therapist encourages him to approach assuring him that he will not lose his identity and that he can be a light within a greater light. At the center of the light he finds an all-encompassing infinitesimally small dot! "I can't describe it! In this tiny dot everything is combined. That is all! That is it. That's it!" After a series of further integrative experiences, the patient swims back to the surface and swims through all the layers which he

¹⁷Gerard, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

previously descended through, only without a feeling of repression or fear. There on the beach he encounters children playing on the sand. He perceives them almost like his own sons and daughters, as part of him. He notes, "At the beginning I had a feeling of annoyance toward the people on the beach. They were noisy, an intrusion. But I had a different feeling when I came back."¹⁸

Gerard notes that another characteristic of genuine contact with the spiritual self, the inner core, the real being of the person, is the transforming power of such an experience, its effectiveness residing in the externalization--on the plane of daily life activities --of a felt inner experience of integral relatedness to others--of oneness to the whole family of man.¹⁹

While the sort of experience described by Gerard is profound and to be enjoyed when it comes, there are many ways in which one may have a living contact with the Self, which has no mystical quality at all, taking mystical in the precise sense of a state of spiritual ecstasy. "The dialogue between the spiritual self and the personality can be unaccompanied by any emotional exultation; it can be on a clear mental level, in a sense, impersonal, objective, and therefore, unemotional. This is a fact that it is well to realize, particularly in treating patients who have no strong, orthodox religious beliefs or affiliations."²⁰ It is also important to note that the mystical

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰Assagioli, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

experience is not an end in itself, but from it the subject has to draw the fire, enthusiasm and incentive to come back into the world and serve God and his fellow men. This is the position of most Christian teachers, and it is also that of Assagioli.²¹

Contraindications

In the use of the directed daydream and other related techniques there is very little written in the literature of psychosynthesis with regard to contraindications or cautions for their use. One exception is the statement of Hans Carl Leuner that Guided Affective Imagery "has been applied successfully to patients with neurosis, psychosomatic disturbances and borderline states. It does not seem useful with either full-blown psychotics or with addicts."²²

In my own experience, the contraindications for the spiritual psychosynthesis techniques are about the same as for related techniques of personal psychosynthesis. Assagioli has spelled out in detail and I have included them in my section on personal psychosynthesis. Basically they are as follows: Borderline cases are to be approached very carefully. In all cases emergence of unconscious material carrying a high intensity or emotional voltage, should be alternated with the use of active techniques to facilitate its integration. Care is to be taken that the exercise does not become a symptom as in the case

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Hans Carl Leuner, "Guided Affective Imagery," *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, XXIII:1 (January 1969), 21.

in which auditory evocation participates in the state of disassociation, activating "voices." Finally care must be taken that the exercise does not become an escape from a reality which needs to be faced.

The Technique of Inner Dialogue

In addition to the geometric forms and centers of energy such as fire and light, personalized symbols of the Self are helpful in spiritual psychosynthesis. In this group are included the angel, the inner Christ--in the mystical sense, the inner Warrior, the Old Sage, and the Inner Master or Teacher. The last symbol of the Inner Teacher is particularly useful because it introduces and is an instrument in establishing a relationship between the spiritual Self and the personal Self through the technique of inner dialogue. The choice of symbols is, of course, governed by philosophical and religious backgrounds of the patient. Religious symbols, such as the inner Christ, would be obviously meaningless to an Atheist or an Agnostic, and in such cases, a symbol such as the Inner Teacher would be indicated.

The patient is asked to imaginatively dramatize the following situation: he imagines himself in a quandary, having a specific personal or interpersonal problem which he cannot solve. He is then directed to make an inner journey, more exactly, an inner ascent, to approach this Inner Teacher and then, in imagination, to simply state the problem. He talks to the imagined Teacher realistically, as if he were a living person. He is to courteously await a response.

On occasion the answer is immediate, although more often it is

delayed and comes in an unexpected moment when the personality is not looking for it. The answer sometimes comes seemingly spontaneously through a third person or through a book or other reading matter, or through the development of circumstances themselves. The facts of formulating a question and being in a state of general expectation helps to register and recognize what could otherwise be overlooked.²³

Gerard notes that the inner dialogue helps the patient to develop a philosophy of life suited to his existential situation, and to find a purpose, direction and meaning to his life. Thus, it may provide an approach toward logotherapy which is concerned with the search for the meaning of human existence.²⁴

Spiritual Psychosynthesis and Prayer

As I seek to relate spiritual psychosynthesis to the phenomenon of Christian spiritual disciplines, especially prayer, it seems important to consider the distinctive aspects of Christian prayer, and also the many forms in which it appears.

Christian prayer rests on two foundations which give it its specific character, belief in the transcendent and personal nature of the God who was revealed in the Bible as the Lord of history and the Creator of the world, and the acceptance of the intimate relation of God and man disclosed by the atoning work of the Incarnate Christ.²⁵

From these truths it follows that the selective attention of the practices of psychosynthesis may be practiced in Christian spirituality

²³*Ibid.*, p. 204.

²⁴Gerard, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

²⁵F. L. Cross (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 1096.

under the dominant ideas of submission to the divine will and recognition of the direct relationship of every creature to God who at once transcends the created order and is immanent in it.

Since we pray through intrapsychic images which are gathered in part through our own experiences, the effort involved in personal psychosynthesis is of the greatest help in developing a creative relationship with God. We have a definite need to work creatively with our own mental images which may negatively effect our perceptions of God. Christian churches have historically taken this effort very seriously. This focused, disciplined, concentration on the mental process of the person praying has always been considered a valid part of the Christian life. In the past this has been more of a Catholic than a Protestant emphasis. Protestantism has tended to focus on the "response of God," the visionary, spontaneous, personal relationship with God. Perhaps the Protestant emphasis upon justification by faith has led to a suspicion of all human effort in regard to communicating with God. This suspicion needs to be set aside and some of the more helpful Catholic literature explored. Following the lines suggested by spiritual psychosynthesis, special attention needs to be given to what has been called "mental prayer," the ascent of the mind to God. An example of this approach is found in *The Cloud of Unknowing*.²⁶ Its author was probably an English country parson of the late fourteenth century, but his exact identity remains unknown. The book's main theme

²⁶*The Cloud of Unknowing* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1961), p. 25.

is that God cannot be apprehended by man's intellect, but only love can pierce "the cloud of unknowing," which lies between them. Its main strength is that, accepting all the Biblical imagery concerning God in Christ, it provides yet another set of images which when focused upon, facilitate experiencing a sense of the presence of God. The first image is the cloud of forgetting under which all thoughts about God must be placed. The second image is the cloud of unknowing which one must move into in order to encounter the presence of love. The experience of walking into this cloud of unknowing through the use of active imagination is a very powerful one.

The psychosynthetic techniques of auditory evocation and symbol utilization are combined in the Russian Orthodox practice of repeating the "Jesus prayer."

The continuous interior prayer of Jesus is a constant uninterrupted calling upon the divine name of Jesus with the lips, in the spirit, in the heart; while forming a mental picture of His constant presence, and imploring His grace, during every occupation, at all times, in all places, even in sleep. The prayer is couched in these terms, 'Lord Jesus Christ, Have Mercy Upon Me.' One who accustoms himself to this appeal experiences as a result so deep a consolation and so great a need to offer the prayer always, that he can no longer live without it, and it will continue to voice itself within him of its own accord.²⁷

According to the Hesychast discipline of the Russian Orthodox Church, the practice of the Jesus prayer brings the soul at last to the state of quiet in which there are no sensible images and no discursive movements of the intellect, but only an imageless intuitive

²⁷*The Way of a Pilgrim* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), pp. 8-9.

apprehension of the soul itself and of God. Then the "flame of grace" is kindled in the soul bringing with it a feeling of warmth and a perception of the "light of Mount Tabor." These results flow chiefly from the use of the Jesus prayer, and can be obtained by that discipline alone, with, of course, the appropriate dispositions of will and character.²⁸

Among the Protestant works, *Pilgrim's Progress* provides a wealth of suggested imagery (e.g., the Celestial City, the Slough of Despond) which might well be re-examined from the standpoint of DeSoilles' insights regarding the psychological effect of ascent and descent.²⁹

From a similar standpoint, the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius might be considered as a progressive movement through meditations on hell, the kingdom of Christ, the passion of Christ, and the contemplation of divine love. Also of interest is the use of other psychosynthetic techniques which Ignatius makes in his *Spiritual Exercises*. The following is an abstract from the second contemplation of the *Spiritual Exercises* which will illustrate the point.

"The first prelude is to review the history of the nativity--how Our Lady, almost nine months with child, set out from Nazareth, seated on an ass, as may piously be believed, together with Joseph and a servant girl leading an ox. They are going to Bethlehem to pay the

²⁸*Unseen Warfare* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), pp. 237-238.

²⁹John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress* (Chicago: Moody Press, n.d.), pp. 13 & 126.

tribute which Caesar has imposed on the whole land.

"The second prelude is to form a mental image of the scene and to see in my imagination the road from Nazareth to Bethlehem. I will consider its length and breadth, whether it is level or winding through valleys and over hills. . . . The first point is to see the persons: Our Lady and St. Joseph, the servant girl, and the Child Jesus after His birth. I would become a poor, miserable and unworthy slave looking upon them, contemplating them, administering to their needs as though I were present there. I will then reflect within myself in order that I may derive some fruit. . . ."

Here we see the psychosynthetic technique of symbolic visualization employed in contemplating the journey of the Holy Family. The technique of symbolic identification is employed as the meditator becomes present in the scene himself in the person of a slave.

The limitation of this technique is, of course, that spontaneity is limited by the continuous suggestions of the person who is reading the text, or by the text itself. Nevertheless, this technique has merit and is quite similar to the one used by Assagioli in the exercise in spiritual psychosynthesis using Dante's *Divine Comedy*.³⁰

In St. Ignatius' fifth contemplation, he employs psychosynthetic techniques of imaginative and auditory evocation, gustatory and olfactory evocation, and tactile and kinesthetic evocation in experiencing the former scene in greater depth.³¹

³⁰ Assagioli, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

³¹ Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*

In thinking of Assagioli's words concerning the tremendous power of mental images to effect changes in the physical world, and remembering the immense effectiveness of the Jesuit order whose spiritual discipline has been built around the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, one can catch a glimpse of the potent possibilities for re-instituting these techniques into the discipline of pastoral counseling.

I am not suggesting that these ancient practices and writings need to be brought into the pastoral counseling movement or into the life of the parish without change or improvement. But I do suggest a point of departure for the employment of psychosynthetic techniques within the Christian tradition. An example of the modernization of these ancient practices is represented in a book entitled, *A Month With the Master*.³² The book is a devotional manual based on the Ignatian method of spiritual exercises and adapted to the contemporary scene.

It is certainly not necessary to translate the grimmer aspects of Catholic piety into contemporary practice. Disciplined spiritual growth, and spiritual exercise need not be characterized by gaunt asceticism. Agnes Sanford in her book, *The Healing Light*,³³ combines

(New York: Doubleday, 1964), pp. 71-72.

³² Archie Matson, *A Month With the Master* (Shaker Heights, Ohio: Disciplined Order of Christ, 1958).

³³ Agnes Sanford, *The Healing Light* (St. Paul: MacAlester Park Publishing Co., 1947).

a lively faith with many of the principles of psychosynthesis and the disciplines of the Catholic inner life, and they have led her to a very powerful ministry of spiritual healing. Her approach to prayer includes the use of visualizing and meditative techniques, coupled with a belief in a radical love of God. In seeking to visualize God's will, she sees the sick man well, the broken bones healed, the nations at peace. She holds these visions up to God, believing that the will of the heavenly Father is that this be so, and that now, as always, he is working to bring this into actuality.

She points out that allegiance to Jesus Christ does not cause us to negate or contradict or deny God's activity in the lives of those who do not follow Him. Rather, when Christ died . . .

He set flowing a stream of life within life, like the Gulf stream within the ocean, or like the main current in a river. This does not contradict anything about the universal life of God who sends His rain on the just and the unjust. It only adds something to it. It adds a specific and personal current of love to that love which is universal. It adds love to love, power to power, life to life.³⁴

Thus, our involvement with Jesus Christ enables us to focus the diffuse love of God much as a magnifying glass focuses the sunlight.

One of the functions of meditation in prayer is to evoke the symbols and energies of the superconscious, or slowly develop a sort of intrapsychic flexibility which allows them to emerge naturally.

It is at this point that both psychosynthesis and prayer are helpful in reducing anxiety and repression by giving in-depth education

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 132.

in the affirmation of the life process, by increasing one's sense of identity, and by helping the person distinguish one's self from the stream of one's feelings and imaginings which frighten or confuse.

One of the cardinal emphases of psychosynthesis is that in all of these meditative experiences, the organism stands in a posture of existential responsibility to its experiences. Any helpless acceptance of either exterior suggestions of the spiritual guide, or inner spontaneous experiences, is to be questioned seriously, and an active, potent stance is to be encouraged. This principle does much toward transforming wooden prayers and meditations into vehicles for contacting the Higher Self.

Spiritual Psychosynthesis and Psychological Disturbances

A great underlying contribution of psychosynthesis is that it provides the pastoral counselor with an understanding of psychological disturbances which embraces the spiritual aspects of man's being. This is in direct opposition to the dominant trend in contemporary psychology which tends to consider higher values and achievement in man as derived from the lower drives through processes of reaction formation, transformation, and sublimation. Once a view of man is held which provides for the essential nature of the higher aspects of man's nature, such as justice, creativity, and altruism, a completely different attitude and approach becomes possible. Spiritual awakening may issue in inner conflicts which are evidences of the effort of the personality to effect a higher harmonization. Problems may have a higher as well

as a lower origin.

Many individuals may have genuine spiritual experiences without being at all integrated, i.e., without having developed a well-organized harmonious personality.³⁵ Man's spiritual development involves a drastic transmutation of the "normal" elements of the personality, an awakening of potentialities hitherto dormant, a rising of consciousness to new realms, and a functioning along a new inner dimension.

We should not be surprised, therefore, to find that so great a change, so fundamental a transformation is marked by very critical stages which are not infrequently accompanied by nervous, emotional, and mental troubles. . . . the incidence of disturbances having a spiritual origin is rapidly increasing nowadays, in step with the growing number of people who, consciously or unconsciously, are groping their way toward a fuller life.³⁶

Assagioli observes that in cases of psychological disturbance which could be described as pathological, the conflicts are between "normal" drives and the conscious ego, or between the ego and the outer world, focusing on significant others, such as parents, spouse or children. In disturbances which originate with the spiritual awakening itself, the conflicts are between the ego and the awakening interests and aspirations toward higher values. It is, of course, possible that the symptoms derive *from both* sources, and here, treatment should proceed from that awareness.³⁷

³⁵Assagioli, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 40.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 43.

(A large number of difficulties which an emerging spiritual man encounters are dealt with both in *Psychosynthesis: A Manual of Principles and Techniques*, and in a monograph, *Self-Realization and Psychological Disturbances* [1961, Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 40 East 49th Street, New York, New York, 10017]. This monograph is an indispensable tool in the library of anyone doing counseling with emotionally disturbed religious persons.)

In the United States today there has developed a wide rift between the established churches and fundamentalist religious movements in which young people are aligning themselves in great numbers. A viewpoint which is supportive of their personal search, regardless of their doctrinal stance, needs to be developed. Religionists have focused on their incomplete theology and psychologists have often been able to see little value in their psychological experiences. Assagioli presents us with a viewpoint that helps us to a more positive understanding of their experience. He notes that people going through such an awakening may beforehand display symptoms of despair, guilt and remorse, symptoms regarded as characteristic of psychoneurosis and borderline schizophrenic states.³⁸

The spiritual awakening causes a crisis of its own. In many cases the personality is inadequate in one or more respects and, therefore, is unable to rightly assimilate the inflow of light and strength. A distinction between absolute and relative truths, between the Higher

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 42.

Self and the "I" is blurred and the inflowing spiritual energies may have the unfortunate effect of feeding and inflating the personal ego.

A reaction to the spiritual awakening may take place in which the sense of joy is dispelled and doubts, anxieties, despair, and so forth, return. Necessarily, this is a very painful experience and is apt, in some cases, to produce strong reactions and cause serious troubles. At times a person can neither enjoy the experience of the heavenly vision, nor can he return to his old state. There follows a process of transmutation, a long process of transition moving slowly out of the old condition without having fully reached the new.

It is at this point that the Church most often fails a new convert. The training of pastoral counselors has thus far provided very little by way of a structural view of the human personality to explain this phenomena. Ministers who have not had a similar experience of their own find no conceptual framework in which to view the person in question, except in the heritage of Biblical faith, which most men find hard to apply to cases of frightening emotional disturbance. The congregation likewise is similarly confused and all withdraw to safe ground, leaving the spiritual pilgrim alone, or in the company of those similarly overwhelmed, forming cultism.

This phenomenon may be understood in the light of Cobb's thought. He writes that axial man feels he must repress the unconscious in order to maintain a rational center of consciousness, while the man who enters into spiritual existence must be prepared to confront the emerging unconscious, endure the suffering that this brings, and

persevere in bringing the whole under the sway of the Self.

In addition to providing a view of personality helpful for understanding the foregoing, psychosynthesis and its active techniques provide valuable tools for enabling people to integrate the unconscious contents into the personality. All of the techniques of personal and spiritual psychosynthesis thus far discussed apply to this problem. It seems to me vitally important for mankind to utilize, and not repress, the powerful energies of the superconscious with its attached values.

Spiritual Psychosynthesis in Groups

In Assagioli's book, *Psychosynthesis: A Manual of Principles and Techniques*, only a few techniques designed specifically for a group setting are described. These include the exercises on the legend of the Grail, and the exercise on Dante's *Divine Comedy*, in which the group members focus on the symbolism in these works, attempting to identify with the symbols, to penetrate their deeper meanings and to relate them to their daily lives. In these exercises, the group members write down any experiences they have had in connection with the symbol and bring them to the discussion at the next group meeting.³⁹ In addition to these exercises, intended primarily for use in groups, Assagioli mentions that some of his other exercises are appropriate for use either with individuals or with groups. For example, he mentions that the exercise in dis-identification and self-identification

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 208.

may be used in a group setting and that the reciprocal stimulation and encouragement the group members give each other may be of great value.

Martha Crampton notes that, although he does not specifically mention the possibility of group application for many of his other exercises, she finds that almost all of them can be properly used in a group setting--possibly more effectively than by individuals alone.⁴⁰ Students seem to benefit from the experiences others have had in using the exercises and may be unwilling to try something that seems difficult or pointless to them until some other group member has reported success with the method. Further, as most people derive satisfaction and stimulation from sharing their learnings with others, this gives them an added motivation to work with the exercise. Crampton further reports that once the techniques have "caught hold" with the individual firmly established on a path of inner growth and experiencing its rewards, the group becomes less necessary. And this is another advantage of the psychosynthesis group--that people do not tend to become addicted to it as often happens in other kinds of groups. With techniques they can use on their own outside of the group setting, people are more inclined to feel they can help themselves to grow even without the support of the group.

A general format of weekly meetings in which group members are introduced to a particular technique or exercise and asked to make their own observations in a notebook as they work

⁴⁰Martha Crampton, *Toward a Psychosynthetic Approach to the Group* (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 1971), p. 1.

with it during the week, is most effective. It is also a format which is easy to apply in educational or other institutional settings.⁴¹

These techniques have a similarity with those used in the "intensive journal" workshops of Ira Progoff.⁴²

Crampton notes that Dr. Assagioli himself has provided few guidelines on the question of what constitutes a psychosynthetic approach to group work and that " . . . (he) wanted to make clear to me when I was working with him in Italy that he looks to us in North America to help fill in this gap in the psychosynthesis outline. . . . Assagioli is, however, deeply interested in groups, and in interpersonal relationships, and I feel that his framework is sufficiently open and comprehensive that one can at least begin to derive a psychosynthetic point of view for group work from his basic principles and orientations."⁴³

That Dr. Assagioli is deeply interested in interpersonal relationships is certainly true. Speaking in connection with the need for spiritual psychosynthesis in which the harmony of one's own will is harmonized with the will of the Higher Self and thus, integrated with other personal wills. He notes that psychosynthesis never becomes final and static but leads to ever new inner conquests and to ever

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴²Ira Progoff, *The Symbolic and the Real* (New York: Julian, 1963), pp. 184-204.

⁴³Crampton, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

broader integrations.⁴⁴

All this is true for each of us as individuals, but it is just as true concerning the relationships which exist, or which can and should be established among human beings. Indeed, an isolated individual is a non-existent abstraction. In reality, each individual is interwoven into an intricate network of vital, psychological and spiritual relations, involving mutual exchange and interactions with many other individuals. Each is included in, and forms a constituent part of, various human groups and groups of groups, in the same way in which a cell is a tiny part of an organ within a living organism. Therefore, individual psychosynthesis is only a step toward inter-individual psychosynthesis.⁴⁵

He notes that various human groups constitute definite psychological units or entities which have their own peculiar life, reality, and being. The first such group is that of man and women. The second is family, the third, communities, the fourth, the nation (a group which he notes is at present raising some very acute problems). He notes that, in spite of all contrasts, all oppositions, and all negative appearances, the principles of interdependence, solidarity, cooperation, brotherhood--that is, of synthesis, are rapidly gaining recognition. There is a movement, outwardly unorganized, but "inwardly closely connected by a common dedication to the same purpose: a psychosynthesis of Humanity."⁴⁶

This concept brings to mind the vision of Teilhard de Chardin concerning the completion of Creation.

⁴⁴Roberto Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis: Individual and Social* (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 1965), p. 5.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 9.

Like a vast tide, the Being will have dominated the trembling of all beings. The extraordinary adventure will have ended in the bosom of a tranquil ocean, in which, however, each drop will still be conscious of being itself. The dream of every mystic will have found its full and proper fulfillment. Erit in omnibus tu omnia Deus.⁴⁷

Although this is an apocalyptic vision, it is also a present reality, and has its coming into actuality through the process of each individual arising in consciousness. Through the tools of psychosynthesis, we have the techniques for the concrete accomplishment of this task. We have, in a sense, the tools for apprehending what Chardin apprehended, and accomplishing for ourselves what he accomplished for himself. The task of "consciencization" begins with the individual struggling with himself, relating to his wife, children, the nation, and the world. It is not an ethereal but a concrete task, and the potential of the psychosynthesis group for enabling him to begin and carry out this task is exciting.

Developing Intuition

In connection with this, one important aspect of the psychosynthesis group is its role in developing creative intuition in which the cognitive and affective seem to merge.⁴⁸ The group members may be asked to concentrate on a particular concept or symbol (e.g., yin yang symbol, the cross, the eye and the pyramid, freedom, the will, etc.),

⁴⁷Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Future of Man* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 308.

⁴⁸Crampton, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

seeking to penetrate its meaning and implications for their own lives, and sharing afterwards what they were able to "pull down" from the super conscious levels. These intuitions are usually clothed in some symbolic form such as visual imagery, spontaneous movement, words or sounds, physical sensations or impulses to action. People can be trained to value and to pay attention to such experiences, thus tapping an important source of creativity within themselves.⁴⁹

Assagioli notes that intuition is one of the most repressed functions, and that it is devaluated by non-recognition and neglect.⁵⁰ A characteristic of intuitions is that they are fleeting, and curiously, very easily forgotten, in spite of the fact that at the time they enter the field of consciousness they are very vivid and the subject does not think he can or will forget them easily. For this reason it is important to write them down and it is also important to be involved in a group setting which is conducive to the emergence of intuition. This is a delicate task because in order to nurture intuition, the group must act as a sounding board, enabling the person to relate the lightening flash of spiritual truth to a wide variety of concrete existential situations. It is widely known that this is a most difficult and complex task and requires patience and tenacity on the part of the individual.

Crampton writes that the use of the technique of having the

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁵⁰Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis: A Manual*, p. 217.

group focus on a central symbol sets an atmosphere in which the participants

feel they are drawing on a transpersonal source which belongs to all yet from which each one can pick up a different aspect because of his particular attunements. The approach seems to have people learn to respect the inner Self and the creative potential within others as well as within themselves, and it is a useful corrective for those who are inclined to believe that they alone have a direct pipeline to truth. The complementary and partial nature of all visions of Reality becomes very evident so that one learns to value the unique contribution that his particular perspective can make as well as the contributions of others. One also becomes sensitized in this way to the ongoing creative process involved in the search for truth; realizing that no single view can be regarded as absolute and final, one becomes more willing to accept the tentative, approximative, in-process nature of all formulations.⁵¹

Theoretical Contributions

Psychosynthesis seems to offer a view of the human personality which allows the possibility of "Christian existence," that way of being human with which Christians have concerned themselves with for centuries, with varying degrees of success.

In a conversation with Dr. Assagioli he stated to me, "There is a basic alliance between Christianity and Psychosynthesis. The Transpersonal (Higher) Self is the soul of the Christian. The language is different. The reality is the same."⁵²

The theorizing of most of academic psychology has been deficient at this level, concerning itself with views of the human personality

⁵¹Crampton, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁵²Personal conversation between Roberto Assagioli and the author, Badia Prataglia, Italy, August 21, 1972.

whose mythic structures of existence form horizons too narrow to encompass Christian existence. Under the heavy influence of psychology, the pastoral counseling movement has had difficulty in understanding or integrating the insights of its tradition, as represented in the New Testament, and the disciplines of mystics and religious orders.

Psychosynthesis offers a contemporary and scientific model which is helpful in making the connection between the old and the new.

More important, it offers a theoretical encouragement for openness to wider possibilities of the human spirit, as well as techniques for actualization. The concept which is most relevant here is that of the Self.

Psychosynthesis also offers views of the imagination and the will, two concepts which have been treated inadequately by psychology, from a Christian point of view. Few psychologists, with the exception of Jung and his followers, have seen the imagination as a creative resource for humanity. Assagioli's concept of the superconscious with its repository of positive images and attached energies, is well defined, and suggests many possibilities for personal growth through the development of a renewed emphasis on personal and corporate prayer and meditation.

The Will, is also a concept largely ignored by contemporary psychologists, and yet seems essential to the Christian concept of humanity. Assagioli's very clear analysis of the various functions of the will, his insights that it is an essential function of the ego, his awareness of the need to integrate imagination and will, all open up

a myriad of new possibilities for pastoral counseling as well as psychology in general.

This positive emphasis toward the resources of the Self, the imagination, and the will is, however, held within the wider influence of dynamic psychology. There is an awareness of the problem posed by unconscious connections between imagination and will resulting in driven behavior. This knowledge prevents Psychosynthesis from making the mistakes which practitioners of positive thinking and psychocybernetics step into.

Methodological Contributions

Methodologically, psychosynthesis offers the pastoral counselor a host of active techniques to be employed wisely in the pattern of fractional analysis, to enable people to develop within themselves resources for overcoming their own inner blocks. This enables the pastoral counselor to extend his role of teacher and educator at a level of high sensitivity and sophistication. It also prepares people, by education at the level of positive depth, for the difficulties inherent in spiritual development. All of the exercises which enhance disidentification with sensory, affective, mental, symbolic contents of consciousness, and which promote identification with sheer consciousness (being), fall into this category of educational techniques of positive depth.

Psychosynthesis provides impetus for a critical reexamination of ancient Christian spiritual practices, as well as an open considera-

tion of practices from other religions which enhance spiritual existence. Key to this re-evaluation is the insistence of psychosynthesis upon a ceaseless existential attitude toward the contents of consciousness, which includes the exercise itself. The awareness that one may observe the total process, including one's decision to practice the exercise, and one's response toward both the exercise, and the emerging contents of consciousness, preserves a sense of spontaneity and meaning. It also provides the freedom to change the exercise according to the unique needs of the individual.

Possibilities for Wider Use

Because of the basic connection between the emphasis upon disidentification and self-identification and worship, many psychosynthesis insights apply to teaching and preaching, and some techniques may apply to congregational worship, as well as spiritual development of individuals and small groups.

A small number of ministers have actually employed some techniques of psychosynthesis in worship services to help their people sense the reality of God.

The Rev. William Moreman, United Church of Christ Minister in Washington, D.C. has used an awareness exercise similar to Assagioli's disidentification exercise in the place of a pastoral prayer. The people are invited to close their eyes, become quiet and aware of their bodies, their inner feelings, their thoughts, and mental images, and to be aware that there are others with them who are similarly aware,

and that there is One, God, who is aware of them.⁵³

The connection between awareness and salvation, and unawareness or unconsciousness and "being lostness" is an intimate one. Shortly after my own conversion to Christ at the age of 24, I remember praying alone and being bathed with the sensation that God knew, was aware, of my presence. He knew I was there. I sensed myself to be found, located in the Universe. I mattered. God was aware of me. I was aware that he was aware. This sounds hopelessly redundant and linguistically awkward. But the experience was anything but that.

My conversion came through acceptance of the evangelical message that Christ died for my sins and I was forgiven. Perhaps this allowed the displacement of judgmental parental introjects which had made it impossible for me to admit that God was aware of me.

The methodological effort of psychosynthesis, rather than an evangelical one, is to work from "the other end," to enable people to experience the gospel rather than to proclaim it, through fomenting experiences of awareness of being akin to Christian worship. Most local congregations have a similar focus. Psychosynthesis offers a method which is clarified and highly developed, and may enable ministers to creatively revise their own ways of encouraging the experience of "awareness of God's awareness" along the lines suggested by William Moreman.

⁵³Personal conversation between William Moreman and the author, Los Angeles, California, June 15, 1972.

The technique of initiated symbol projection or symbolic visualization may also be used in worship services. The author has done so by inserting the following meditation in place of a sermon during the Episcopal Communion Service or Service of Morning Prayer.

Now, please close your eyes. I would like for you to imagine yourself relaxing. Sit comfortably in your chair so that you are able to relax. Don't try too hard. Don't push. Just relax. Allow yourself to feel your entire body relaxing. And permit your mind to become very relaxed.

Now I would like you to imagine that you are in a meadow. This is a very large meadow, and it is green and lush with grass. It is early morning, and the sun is shining in the meadow. A light breeze blowing across the meadow invigorates the air and makes you feel refreshed.

I want you to imagine now that you are one sheep in a large flock of sheep. All of the sheep are grazing in this beautiful meadow, and you are grazing also, with all of the other sheep. If you look over, you will see a large tree in this meadow and a beautiful little stream running through the meadow, running close to this tree. There is a shepherd standing under the tree. You have had enough to eat now, and it is noon, so it is time to go lie down in the shade. You and the rest of the sheep go to the tree and lie down in its shade. It is very pleasant and cool, just warm enough to make you feel comfortable.

You are waking up now, and you feel thirsty, so you are going over to the little stream for a drink of its cool water. All of the other sheep are going over for a drink of water, and you are going too. You notice the shepherd standing there, so you know that it is safe to take a drink of water.

Now that you have had your drink of water it is time for you to start for the hills. The shepherd is leading the flock off to the hills, and he is leading you too. So you follow him across the meadow until you come to a mountain trail. The mountain trail is very steep, and the sheep must follow the shepherd up the trail. All of the sheep are following their shepherd up the steep mountain trail, and you are following him too. The trail becomes steeper and steeper until finally there is a ledge over which the sheep are not able to climb. But the shepherd stands beside this ledge and lifts each sheep over as it comes along. He lifts you over too. After the last sheep has been helped over the ledge, the shepherd leads you up the trail to a

table-top grazing land for a few moments of relaxation and grazing.

After this, your shepherd leads you down the other side of the mountain trail. It is getting dark now. The trail is steep and rocky, and there are wolves along the side of the trail. But the shepherd is there, and he is guarding his sheep. So you are safe, because he is there.

Now you come to the bottom of the trail, and you see a large corral. The shepherd goes to the corral gate and opens it, allowing all of the sheep to go into the corral. As they go in, he stands by the gate and wipes the dust off of each sheep. He picks up the ones that are bruised and takes care of their cuts and bruises, and then puts them into the fold, along with the others. He picks you up, cares for your bruises, and puts you in there too. Then he closes the gate. You are in the corral, and you are safe.

Now I would like you to imagine becoming yourself, and you are in a church. It is in the evening. The light is coming through the stained-glass windows just enough for you to see that all of the other sheep have become themselves too, and they are in the chapel also. Now I would like you to ponder on this for a few moments. Whenever you wish you may open your eyes.

In this case, symbolic scenes are developed by the leader which follow Biblical motifs and are deemed conducive for evoking the contents of the superconscious. The congregation is invited to close their eyes and follow in active imagination, unless they wish to stop, in which case they may simply open their eyes, and sit quietly until the rest are finished. (This is to insure against forcing people to unwillingly deal with negative imagery that might be very close to the surface for them. Public worship often embraces people the pastor does not know at all.)

The pastor may control the meditation from beginning to end in the case of an untrained congregation, or a situation which allows for little feedback and discussion. Here the meditation would amount to a

participative sermon at greater depth.

For trained congregations, or smaller groups where some preparation for the experience has been made, and open discussion is possible afterwards, the pastor may make allowances for individual inner needs by leaving the meditation open-ended. The final suggestion may be that they wait expectantly for the appearance of someone who will speak wisdom to them, or a suggestion that they enter a door and find something they need. The inner condition of the person is then allowed to provide the answer.

The more intimate the group situation, the more allowance can be made for inner spontaneity. The reason for this is that occasionally disturbed people encounter negative inner images which evoke hostility in them towards the experience. This possibility is limited by leader control.

For the use of symbolic visualization after the manner earlier described by Robert Gerard in which the patient is left completely free to move in the meditation, both a committed group, and an experienced counselor are important.

Growth Groups

Both the awareness exercise, and the symbolic visualization technique are applicable to *growth groups* in the church. Growth groups, committed to developing the creative strengths inherent in its members, provide a natural environment for the teaching and practice of active techniques. The disidentification-identification exercise

might form the basis for enabling people to use their ultimate strength for coping with their penultimate weaknesses. The weaknesses need not occupy an emphatic position, rather awareness of one's self as a center of pure consciousness occupies the center of concern.

The Personal Journal

An integral part of the psychosynthesis approach involves helping people to take charge of their own growth through the use of a personal journal. In a personal conversation, Mr. James Vargiu explained to me that active techniques may be assigned for homework, and a journal kept in which part of the contents relates to the person's experience with the exercises.

"We work together with the person on what the assignment should be. Then when the assignment is made, a journal report is requested. If the exercise was abandoned, we don't insist it can be done, but rather persist in requiring an explanation for the situation. Finally, if the problem continues, the question of resistance is brought up and the technique of fractional analysis is introduced. But the whole issue is focused upon persistently."⁵⁴

An example of the Journal or Psychological notebook that was used by the Psychosynthesis Institute at Redwood City is included.

Such a personal journal could easily be adapted to a religious context by including reflection upon experiences of personal prayer

⁵⁴Personal conversation between James Vargiu and the author at Badia Prataglia, Italy, August 19, 1972.

ON KEEPING A PSYCHOLOGICAL WORKBOOK

One of the most useful instruments for long term self-development is a workbook, diary, or journal. We use the term 'psychological workbook' because many people tend to associate the word 'diary' with memories of adolescence in which often trivial and burdensome accounts were kept of one's daily activities.

The type of workbook suggested here has as its purpose the recording of your inner life and its developments. Outer events may be recorded inasmuch as they are related to inner events (feelings, thoughts, observations), but the focus should be on the unfolding awareness of oneself and the world, and on the new meanings, values, and inter-relationships one is able to discover.

There are many purposes for keeping a workbook of this sort. One of the most important is to help ourselves formulate our thoughts, feelings, and observations with greater clarity. And in the act of putting something on paper we tend to commit ourselves to a greater extent. We are taking a step beyond simply thinking or saying something when we make the effort to write it down. Also, in the process of thought clarification through writing, we are obliged to choose between alternate points of view, we are thus less likely to deceive ourselves by holding contradictory views without being aware of it. If there is a problem to be solved or an area of real confusion, we are better able to define it and thus take the first step towards its resolution.

The act of writing is also a great stimulus to the creative process. When we are trying to grapple with a problem, it is a common experience that in writing down a few thoughts on the question, other related thoughts begin to stream in through a process of association, and these ideas in turn open up new avenues of thought, new possibilities we may not have considered before. If we can learn to let our minds range freely in this manner, we will be truly amazed to discover the depth of the insights already within us — just waiting to be liberated.

Keeping a workbook as a technique of self-development also functions in other ways. It gives us an opportunity to express in a harmless way any powerful and disruptive emotions we may have bot-

tled up inside us. If we can learn to 'let off steam' through writing, we will have a useful means of discharging tensions, and of becoming aware of what underlies them. Writing is also a useful exercise for developing the faculties of concentration, attention, and control of the will. It may help a person who is somewhat shy, and reluctant to express himself in a face-to-face setting, to explore certain aspects of himself more freely.

For all these reasons keeping a workbook can be an important aspect of the psychosynthesis process in that it is a method which one can employ on his own initiative, as he takes the process of his growth and self-realization increasingly into his own hands.

In addition to written material, one can make drawings and other visual aids a part of the workbook. These may be of various kinds. In one category are images — which may come to you in the form of dreams, fantasies, or visualizations. In another category are diagrams, more abstract symbols, or visual aids which we can use to express our ideas in graphic form. This is useful in developing clear concepts and in communicating these concepts to others. A final category is what one might call 'spontaneous drawing'. This should be done when we are in a relaxed state of mind and when our attention is fixed on something else — as when we are doodling. Such drawings reflect the activity of the unconscious mind and may be of value in self-understanding. Thus, drawing as well as writing can be part of a complete workbook.

Here are headings of possible areas for inclusion in your workbook. It is suggested you choose among them the ones that, according to your own needs and experience, are likely to be of greater value. But, of course, your choice can be revised at any time. It is important to date each entry, in order to provide a developmental perspective.

Dialogue with ideas: Include a heading for any area of vital intellectual interest in which you are trying to advance your own understanding — e.g., Education, Religion, Mathematics, Systems Theory, Ecology, etc.

Dialogue with persons: Insights into or questions about your relationships.

Dialogue with events: Your response to meaningful events in your life; note occasions on which you are aware of 'synchronicity'.

Inner dialogues: Miscellaneous thoughts, musings, intuitions, questions, or speculations which do not fit under other headings.

Dreams: Description, context, associations, and amplifications of your night dreams (which are most easily recorded immediately upon waking.)

Imagery: Visualizations, or experiences in other sensory modalities. This may include images which come spontaneously or while using one of the guided mental imagery techniques. These can be recorded in writing and/or through drawings. It is helpful to record the feelings and associations you have in response to the image, or to different parts of it (form, color, etc.), its meaning for you, and a tentative interpretation if possible.

Imagination: Fantasies, stories, situations, etc., which might serve as the seed for an imaginative work. This category is best limited to those fantasies which have some creative potential.

Diagrams: Graphic models of theoretical constructs (though you may wish to include these under the headings of the various areas of intellectual interest instead). These will help you express your thoughts visually, and this may be useful for purposes of clarification and visual communication.

Meditation: Notes on techniques of meditation with which you have experimented, seed ideas used, and results obtained. Note any insights or intuitions which come through.

Self: Notes on your sense of personal identity, answers to the 'Who Am I?' questions, experiences with 'self-remembering' and other meditative techniques related to the question of essential being.

Will: Notes on your experience with the various stages of the will, and evaluation of your areas of strength and weakness. Note any occasions and their distinctive circumstances in which you were aware of yourself making use of the will, and record your results with the exercises for developing the will.

Techniques for growth: Your experience with the various approaches which do not fall under other headings. Please note as fully as possible the circumstances under which the various approaches were helpful or not and your opinion of the reasons underlying success or failure with a particular method.

Peak experiences: Any 'high' or 'deep' experiences of peace, joy, love, expansion, awakening, etc., and their circumstances and effects.

Hangups: Personal weaknesses of which you are aware and on which you would like to work. Particular emphasis can be placed on the techniques you can use to overcome them. Record also any strong negative reactions you have to other people as they may clarify your own unrecognized and projected problems.

Quotations: Personally meaningful quotations from your readings.

Time perspectives: To make the contact with your own movement through time, through the past into the present and toward the future. Stepping stones (bridges from where we were to where we are or hope to be), intersections (roads taken and not taken), and memories may be noted.

Adapted from writings of Martha Crampton, and the work of Ira Progoff

and meditation, upon Scriptures, and literature from the specific religious tradition.

The degree or depth to which fractional analysis proceeds depends upon the gifts and training of the counselor and the need of the person. But as a principle it falls firmly within the Christian tradition under the heading of confession. Most growth group members eventually desire to explore their resistances at some limited depth, and will do so either in the group, or in a private conversation with the counselor.

The group and journal, as used by Vargiu, provides a wonderful tool for helping new converts grow. He notes that many people who have a deep experience of illumination, or who experience a breakthrough in therapy, undergo a "miraculous change" which often fades away. Vargiu asks such people to keep an "evening review" of the day's activities in their journal. He asks them to, for example, list the times the old self-defeating response occurred, and how many times the new response held firm.⁵⁵ This is done in a non-evaluative, non-judgmental way, neither praising nor condemning, merely evoking awareness. This serves as an anchor for firming up the will in connection with the creative response.

New converts, experiencing a non-static infusion of energy from the superconscious and the higher Self are prone to both vascillation and self-condemnation. Encouraging the attitude of the pure

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

observer helps both, as well as strengthening their sense of being and identity. Local congregations participating in highly organized evangelistic efforts such as Billy Graham Crusades could easily adapt Psychosynthesis techniques in following up referrals. And of course, the local Church, seeking to help people grow gradually into an awareness of their own higher Self and of God would find a great deal to aid them as well.

The one exercise Dr. Assagioli feels is applicable to all stages of therapy is the exercise of disidentification and self-identification.

Often many of the active techniques cannot be used at the beginning (of counseling). The existential problem must be discovered and solved in a constructive and transpersonal way. Life has meaning. The person must initially be helped to discover that this is true, and to discover the meaning of his own life. After that, for instance, after a person has had a conversion, the problem is how to harmonize the new view with the old. There, active techniques are necessary.

The disidentification technique belongs to both efforts. To solve the first problem (of discovering the meaning of life) one must disidentify with the problem and identify with the Self. And when one comes to identify with the center of one's being, the technique is helpful in maintaining that sense of a center (from which integration proceeds).⁵⁶

Format for a Possible Group

A possible approach to utilizing psychosynthesis techniques in a church setting might be as follows:

⁵⁶ Assagioli conversation, *op. cit.*

1. Form a growth group of 8 to 20 members. At the initial meeting explain the use of the personal journal and ask each person to keep one.
2. Lead the group in a short meditation based on the approach suggested earlier in this chapter. (A source of Biblically oriented meditations may be found in *A Month With the Master*, by Archie Matson. [See Bibliography])
Invite people to reflect upon and discuss their experiences. Point out their capacity to reflect and discuss the uniquely human quality of this ability.
3. Introduce and lead the group in the exercise in dis-identification drawing upon religious parallels, some of which are suggested in this chapter. Ask people to practice it faithfully, noting their experience in their journals. During the succeeding meetings invite people to share their successes, failures, and reflections concerning the exercise, as well as experiences under the other headings of the notebook.
4. Further leader input could consist of inviting the group to join in further narrative meditations, group meditations around various Judaeo-Christian symbols (the Cross, the Star of David, the Lion, the Lamb, the Burning Bush, Jerusalem, the River Jordan) on inner dialogues with the Christ, followed by discussion.
5. Increasingly encourage people to take the part of pure observer of their inner experiences, letting their own images teach them

their meaning through techniques of amplification and dialogue.

6. If possible systematically meet individually with the group members to discuss their journal entrees and personal situations.

Professional Counselors

For the pastoral counselor who functions as a full time professional in that field, and who is essentially a psychotherapist in a religious setting, or with a religious background, psychosynthesis offers tools which widen the spectrum of his ministry.

One obvious direction is helping people beyond the level of symptom removal. Growth from the point of psychosynthesis is endless and healthy people can be enabled to further actualization through the active techniques.

On the opposite end, psychosynthesis offers much to people who are severely disturbed. It is widely recognized that people have to be sick to recognize their need for a physician. The satisfied seldom seek therapy. On the other hand, it is less widely understood that a person must have a certain level of health and a sense of strength to be involved in therapy. Many people are lost in therapy by those who have only analytic techniques or supportive techniques which can only sustain, at their disposal. Active techniques which contact a level of positive depth enable very disturbed people to gradually move forward to the place where they can endure the emergence of negative emotions and imagery. Among these are the techniques of disidentifi-

cation and self-identification, and meditation on creative symbols.

Perhaps the most important issue for pastoral counselors, be they full time professional counselors or ministers occasionally in that function, is that of their own personal development. Here, the training of the will is an exceedingly important issue, and the lack of strong, effective will is characteristic of many churchmen today. This issue came up in a discussion with Dr. Assagioli on the relationship between magic and religion which dwell side by side and often overlap. In response to my request that he comment on this matter, Assagioli replied:

Historically religious men, at least Christians, have emphasized love and have neglected the will. Magic, and I speak of it in the broadest sense, has emphasized will, achievement, power, without love.

The solution, theoretically, is clear. The good religious men must become strong and the strong men must become good. Wisdom must be included as a balancing, higher factor.⁵⁷

Ministers and pastoral counselors comprise a group of men with more than an ordinary concern for discipline and inner growth, and it may be that they will prove open to the type of training suggested by Assagioli, for training the various aspects of the will. In addition to this, ministers are largely concerned with right use of power and may be open to a Higher Wisdom for integrating love and will.

Above all, pastoral counselors have a need for growing in their sense of being. The presence of Christ, agape, the Holy Spirit, are all related to awareness of being. The capacity to regard another,

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

seeing the good and bad, from the standpoint of the pure observer, all the while affirming the goodness of the other's being, is a capacity which permeates every aspect of the growth relationship, melts fixations, dethrones idols, and frees the healing energies of the soul. Tools for development at this level of personhood have been missing for the serious spiritual man of the 20th century. It seems that in psychosynthesis some resources have emerged.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The Limitations of Psychosynthesis

As does any approach to viewing and helping the human situation, Psychosynthesis has a number of limitations. In presenting them, I hope to convey the attitude toward limitations in general which seems to me inherent in Psychosynthesis, and which is reflected in the following statement by Robert Gerard. The context of his remark was a workshop in which one of the members had expressed embarrassment. Gerard first indicated he accepted the person's embarrassment. Then he said, "Perhaps you may look upon your embarrassment as an impasse which affords an opportunity for transcendence. When this impasse is transcended, another and another will present themselves and you may keep transcending them, until finally you have transcended them all."¹

It is difficult to convey the powerfully encouraging mood conveyed by the speaker to the embarrassed person. But the sense of viewing impasses or limitations as opportunities for growth rather than insoluble problems was vividly communicated. I think this is the spirit in which Psychosynthesis views its own limitations, and so, as I present them I think it appropriate to do so in such a manner.

¹Robert Gerard, Psychosynthesis Workshop, June 1972.

Incompleteness. One of the limitations of Psychosynthesis is that it points in directions that it cannot circumscribe. This is particularly true regarding the "Higher Self" which is not available to present empirical approaches of investigation. All studies of Man have this problem, but because Assagioli descriptively makes so much of the inner world the limitation looms especially large. His efforts to describe this inner world are supported by Maslow who limited his utterances largely to descriptions of human experiences in response to a "center" which, throughout his writings, remained largely undescribed. Whether Assagioli's "mythic" approach, or Maslow's "empirical" approach is better, only time will tell.

Here the limitation is severe: How to describe the Self, or the experience of the Self, both of which are inherently indescribable? An answer is found in the ceaseless effort of helping others toward their own discovery, which, though it cannot be described, can be shared.

Theological Limitations. From the standpoint of the Christian tradition, Psychosynthesis does not make very much of the problem of *sin*. It is fair to say that it has no comprehensive view of the nature and dynamics of human evil. If there is a tendency, however, it is to see human problems in terms of a *lack of completeness*.

"When one comes to realize the center of one's being, then begins the task of accepting oneself with all one's shortcomings. We are imperfect. The universe is imperfect because it is in evolution. Teilhard de Chardin has shown this. The planet, each of us, is

imperfect.

The emphasis is not on fighting sin. One does not need to fight one's lower self, one needs to transform it; not judge it, rather assess it, transmute it, use it realistically."²

Christian theologians have varied widely in their view toward sin. Some have described it as Assagioli and Teilhard have. Others have approached the view that it has become substantive and inherent in the human personality.

Both polar views have their problems. In Assagioli's view, one can detect his concern for the motor effect of mental images. Here, as elsewhere, he is very leary of encouraging a focus on anything negative because of the tendency for psychic energy to constellate around mental images. He would rather focus attention upon the solution. For example, in discussing the problem of war with me, he described the basic problem as that of effectively channeling men's aggressive energies into creative endeavors.³

It is fair to say, that in the history of the Christian church, the problem of sin has in fact been worsened by the church's focus upon it.

On the other hand, the church's concern that the problem of sin is too great for man to handle apart from the grace of God is very real, and cannot be dismissed as ecclesiastical concern for maintaining

²Roberto Assagioli, Private conversation with the author, August 21, 1972.

³*Ibid.*

a continuing market for its product.

Mankind has, and continues, to use its energies in ways that destroy human existence, and which threaten the very fabric of meaning without which the human enterprise cannot continue. This phenomenon is deadly serious, and the questions as to whether Assagioli gives sufficient theoretical expression to this problem should be asked. The final answer will be determined by each individual according to his own personal and theological bias.

Although the theoretical formulation of the problem of sin may be problematic in psychosynthesis, there is not the same problem with its handling of the phenomenon at a practical level. The heights and depths of human perfidy are faced with the assurance that evil is not ultimate in human experience, and that accepting its actual existential presence can only facilitate its transformation by the energies of the Self.

Another theological limitation of Psychosynthesis is that it can appear to approach a deterministic view toward the triumph of the Self in its efforts toward full actualization and integration. Assagioli actually warns against this.

. . . Some caution should be used (here) for all reactions have the tendency to go towards the other extreme, and one can already note evidence of such over-compensation in this field. Some representatives of the new current show a leaning towards reversion to the former conception of man as an already unified personality which unfortunately is far from being the case. The drive toward integration has been rightly described and emphasized as a basic and normal urge of the human personality; but this is something quite different from the illusion of an already organically and harmoniously functioning personality.⁴

⁴Roberto Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis: Manual of Principles and*

Although he notes that Man is not presently integrated, one occasionally gets the sense from Assagioli's writings that eventually this *must* happen. The Higher Self, viewed as a causative given *can* be interpreted (or as I feel, mis-interpreted) as a deterministic force. While I don't think Assagioli means to convey this, his positive approach leaves him open for this sort of misinterpretation.

Psychological Limitations. Psychosynthesis lacks a clearly developed psychology of *social interaction*. Beginning from the "within" or human experience and devoting great effort to the nature of creative inner experiences as well as the methods for fostering it, Assagioli has only a few pages to direct towards the interaction of people in groups or between groups.

This is not because he thinks these matters unimportant.

Finally, all human individuals and groups of all kinds should be regarded as elements, cells, or organs (that is, living parts) of a greater organism which includes the whole of mankind. . . . The essential unity of origin, of nature and of aims, and the unbreakable interdependence and solidarity between all human beings and groups are a spiritual, psychological, and practical reality.⁵

Rather it seems that the immense effort involved in spelling out a new psychology of the inner man has not left time for the further task.

It seems to me that Assagioli's concepts lend themselves

Techniques (New York: Hobbs, Dorman, 1965), p. 36.

⁵Roberto Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis: Individual and Social* (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 1965), p. 9.

admirably to social areas. The task lays open before those concerned to begin the immense task of applying this particular ortho-psychology to marriage, the family, communities and nations.

Another series of limitations is represented by the contraindications listed for the use of the various active techniques. These techniques are as powerful as they are simple, and should be used carefully by all, and not at all by some.

The dangers involved in the use of the active techniques are clearly spelled out in all of Assagioli's writings, and are represented in this dissertation in a necessarily shortened form.

Within the framework of caution set forth by Assagioli, the techniques still need to be applied with an ongoing awareness of what people are doing with them. All good theories and techniques can be misunderstood and misapplied and the more potent they are, the greater the difficulty caused. People in psychological difficulty are there because they have a continued propensity for misinterpreting and misapplying what comes their way, so added caution is needed.

Missing in the literature of Psychosynthesis is hard statistical data for the validity of its theories and techniques. This is not unusual for an emerging school of psychological thought at its early stages, but it is a definite limitation at this time.

An effort at remedying this situation has been begun by James and Susan Vargiu, who have used the Personal Orientation Inventory developed by Everett Shostroms to measure change in gifted adolescents

involved in psychosynthesis.⁶

In the past a problem for researchers in Transpersonal Psychology has been the absence of techniques for measuring the effect of inner techniques upon the human organism. Recent development in the field of brain wave measurement and bio-feedback mechanisms has opened many doors to those who would like to do research in psychosynthesis. The systematic measurement of the effect of various techniques certainly seems a valuable area of exploration.

Practical Limitations. With so very many psychologies about, one suspects that certain schools of thought are developed by and for certain types of people who move successfully within that given frame of reference. I suspect that this is true, and that certain types of people are more able to learn and practice psychosynthesis than others. Who are these people and what are they like?

Just as in any other human endeavor, the gifted profit the most dramatically from the experiences that come their way. In this sense, psychosynthesis is very much like any other psychology.

Because of its emphasis upon holism and the use of evocative symbols, it seems to me that psychosynthesis has a special appeal to the intuitive type of person. The intuitive function takes into account large amounts of data in an unconscious way, making connections between numerous symbols, arriving at an answer which presents itself

⁶Susan Vargiu, *Psychosynthesis Case Studies: Three Gifted Adolescents* (Redwood City, CA: Psychosynthesis Institute, 1971), pp. 6, 10, 16.

to the conscious mind sans conscious logical process.

"The intuitive mode of perception is 'unconscious' because a person with this preference 'knows' or 'grasps' without knowing why or how he knows or grasps."⁷

While Psychosynthesis does not seem to appeal strictly to the intuitional type, such a person certainly has an advantage in learning and practicing its precepts.

While there is little correlation between success in school and intuitive abilities, the latter are highly related to creativity. Using the Myers-Briggs type indicator, MacKinnon found that over 90% of creative writers, architects, and mathematicians were either intuitive-thinking or intuitive-feeling types.⁸

Mogar further notes that both the upper and lower extremes of the academic spectrum operate intuitionally, and that this applies to social classes as well. Lower and upper middle classes both indicate more of a propensity for intuitional perception than does the middle class.⁹

This would suggest, as I have previously stated, that psychosynthesis offers something to the polar extremes of the population often missed by most educational, and many psychotherapeutic approaches.

⁷Robert E. Mogar, "Toward a Psychological Theory of Education," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, IX:1 (Spring 1969), 20.

⁸D. W. MacKinnon, "The Nature and Nurture of Creative Talent," *American Psychologist*, XVII (1962), 484-495.

⁹Mogar, *op. cit.*, 29.

It also suggests that a middle group may be limited in their interest or ability to be involved in psychosynthesis.

Viewing this limitation as an opportunity for growth, the techniques forwarded by Assagioli for the strengthening of the intuitive function come to mind. For the many pastors who are not intuitive types, or who have been discouraged in the use of their intuition by the prevalent educational system, this does indeed present a problem. Perhaps it means they should choose another counseling approach. But then again, perhaps it means that they should pick up the gauntlet and involve themselves in the training of their intuition.

Certainly anyone who practices psychosynthesis is going to be challenged to his utmost capacity in order to function effectively as a counselor. Offering active techniques to another person is a delicate task, requiring of the pastoral counselor a deep sense of his own identity and a profound respect and awareness of the other person's identity and spiritual dignity. It is very possible for a pastoral counselor with unresolved and unconscious authority problems to force an active technique on another person in a destructive way. Thus he is going to be challenged toward a self-awareness of his own in order to do this work effectively. Since it is a principle of psychosynthesis to strengthen the weaker functions, many a pastor may find himself working to develop his own intuition.

The case is somewhat different for the person who approaches the counselor in crisis. There is seldom time to develop a function within the person to meet his immediate need. The counseling approach

needs to be tailored to his immediate capacities. If he is an intuitive type he may profit from early involvement in the guided affective imagery approach. If not, another approach should be used.

By virtue of its concept of man as a whole, tending toward integration around a synthesizing center, Psychosynthesis can and does include elements of therapies which deal with less complex functions than, for example, the intuitive and creative ones. Elements of analytic, ego-adaptive, and social psychologies are explicitly included by Assagioli.

In its current state psychosynthesis has not spelled out its relationship to many other psychotherapeutic approaches, and this constitutes a real limitation. However it seems to me that in the spirit of true synthesis (which goes beyond eclecticism) appropriate therapies for all the various conditions of the total man may be genuinely included. This may be done not only by the official writings of Assagioli or his disciples, but also by individual counselors who can make their own synthesis of theory and technique within the overarching precepts.

The principles and techniques of psychosynthesis as I have set them forth in this paper represent an emphasis, even a counter-balance, to a vast body of psychological thought which has gone before. Dr. Assagioli is keenly aware of this body of psychological knowledge. In order that I not mislead the reader, I think it is important that I include here some principles, and some resource materials which I believe important to provide an effective counter-balance for the

person who reads the material of psychosynthesis without a broader education in the entire field of psychotherapy.

First and foremost is the absolutely vital necessity of distinguishing between idealizations in our self and in other people, and the "ideal models" which are suggested by Assagioli as appropriate constellations for motive drives in the re-building of the personality.

The discovery of one's own personal idealized images, the painful ego states that lie behind these idealized images, the life strategies which accompany the idealized images and by which we defend against our own inner pain; the discovery of all of these is very much a part of the whole process of psychosynthesis. Although the process of fractional analysis is somewhat different than the classical or neo-classical psychoanalytical approach, the melting of self-idealizations is a sine qua non for effective psychosynthesis.

This does not appear an emphatic point in the literature of psychosynthesis, yet it is a given over against which the literature is written.

The church is full of people who have a marked tendency to style their lives as "perfect" or "nice" or "good" in order to avoid the awful, even terrifying imagined threat of conflict with significant others whose rejections is unconsciously perceived as annihilating. The cross of Christ stands as a stark emblem opposing such lifestyles, and the resurrection is a powerful motivation for running the perceived risk of annihilation which always accompanies being one's true self.

That so many people would live self-idealized lives as members

of an organization whose founder lived, died and rose again to oppose such a way of life, is a testimony to the persistence and difficulty with which self-idealization clings to the human enterprise. Therefore it is important for those interested in involving themselves in psychosynthesis also to involve themselves in an awareness of the process of idealization, and as much as possible, an understanding of their own self-idealizations. Now as ever, one's own personal psychosynthesis, including this aspect of the analytic phase, is the best method. The books of Karen Horney,¹⁰ are a good place to begin in intellectually approaching this topic.

Because psychosynthesis involves a personal and inner orientation toward the solution of human problems, focusing upon one's inner awareness, inner freedom, and the capacity to respond inwardly to one's environment, there is a need to counter-balance this individual and inner emphasis with other approaches which take very seriously the outside world. (The purpose of this inner focus after all is aimed at gaining some measure of freedom and response to one's *total* environment.) Three important approaches suggest themselves as important balancing correlates to psychosynthesis.

The first is related to the dynamics of the therapeutic relationship itself. The person is not sealed in a vacuum, but is in a dynamic relationship with the therapist. This is taken for granted by Assagioli, although a great deal is not made of the fact. A good

¹⁰Karen Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts* (New York: Norton, 1945); see also, Karen Horney, *Self-Analysis* (New York: Norton, 1942).

place to begin in considering this matter is the interpersonal school of Harry Stack Sullivan. His book, *Conceptions of Modern Psychiatry*,¹¹ speaks to the issue.

The second important issue involves the demands which the realities of daily life make upon us who live in the world. No amount of inner enlightenment relieves us of the task of wrestling with the sweaty issues of daily life which often yield reluctantly to the best of our efforts. *Reality Therapy* by William Glasser¹² provides a good framework for beginning to explore the possibilities of helping people use their life situations as resources for personal growth.

The third area for concern involves an awareness of the impact of the family on self-actualization. It is my contention that the family, both the actual family and the internalized family of the individual person, contains a key to powerful images and concomitant energies available in the therapeutic endeavor. The family is definitely another of the unspoken givens over against which Assagioli writes.

An appreciation and an understanding of the dynamics of family interaction, is an important help in counter-balancing the personal and individual thrust of psychosynthesis. In addition, when the family is taken seriously, idealizations are challenged as well as the individual being put in touch with a most powerful structure of social

¹¹Harry Stack Sullivan, *Conceptions of Modern Psychiatry* (London: Tavistock, 1955).

¹²William Glasser, *Reality Therapy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).

interaction. *Conjoint Family Therapy* by Virginia Satir¹³ deals with this topic in a succinct and understandable way.

The limits of personal openness in the counselee are faced by psychosynthesis along with all psychological approaches. The highly intellectualized person closed to many psychosynthesis techniques is an example of this. Such a person who comes for counseling is not thrust into dealing with symbol born energies which do not interest him. He is allowed to remain with the tasks of consciously defining his own self-concept, relating this to the written questionnaires, to the various roles he discovers through the keeping of his personal journal, and begins to relate these to the personal problems plaguing him. As early as possible he begins the identification exercise, slowly identifying with his personal self and disidentifying with the functions of his personality. As his identification with intellectual process relaxes, and his sense of being is strengthened, he may be led further toward deeper, more inward states of relaxation through techniques of, for example, initiated symbol projection. Eventually he may be pointed toward an experience of Higher Self through meditation and inner dialogue. But this is clearly a long process which must begin with where the person is, and proceed only as rapidly and as far as he is able.

This brings us to the limitations of time. Although Psychosynthesis tends to progress more rapidly than the analytic approach,

¹³Virginia Satir, *Conjoint Family Therapy* (Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books, 1967).

it is still a very time consuming process. The sort of growth Assagioli talks of needs to be measured in terms of years. In addition to the resolution of symptomatic behavior which in itself is time consuming, psychosynthesis fosters the self-actualizing process in a growth oriented way that could last a lifetime. The limits are upon the resources of the pastoral counselor and the person seeking growth, in terms of time, motivation, and money.

What is really being discussed is the discovery of one's spiritual identity, a process which is notoriously time consuming. Once the parameters of growth are widened to include the entire life cycle as Erikson does, it can be seen that the self-actualizing process is bounded in this world only by death.

The pastoral counselor does not always have the time to do this kind of work. If he is a pastor, the ordinary needs of congregational life fill his schedule already. Serious personal and spiritual growth often competes with sermon preparation and meeting the monthly budget.

The professional pastoral counselor often has a heavy load of crisis intervention situations or short term counseling situations in which people's motivation for growth is limited to removing immediate discomforts. In either case the counselor himself has little time to pursue his own growth and has a limited number of people who desire to pursue their own growth with him.

Like other limitations, this one provides an opportunity for transcendence and the emergence of new approaches and even structures

for the church.

Throughout the ages the pursuit of spiritual discipline and growth has come into conflict with the demands of everyday life, and we should not expect this age to be any different, nor look upon the resulting anxiety and tension as inherently bad. Discipleship has always entailed a certain sacrifice which, perceived from a stance of "pure consciousness," can be seen as meaningful, and can be appropriately integrated into the whole of experience. The people of the Christian Church are, I think, more familiar with this truth than their leaders are prone to expect.

The question arises, "Can psychosynthesis enrich the *total ministry* of the church and not just the area of pastoral counseling?" There is, after all, relatively little value in giving just another very technical model of counseling which cannot be integrated into this broader and more basic task of spiritual nurture. This is a very important question, and one to which I can provide only a provisional answer to. I have just discussed some of the limitations in employing psychosynthesis, and they are significant. The need for native ability, time, the need for participating with someone of technical proficiency, at least part of the time; all of these militate against a person's involvement in psychosynthesis.

On the other hand this approach does have definite aspects which commend it to the pastoral ministry at large.

One of the chief ones is that psychosynthesis may be employed at an "educational" level. A didactic approach to its active

techniques may yield in-depth spiritual education.

Another advantage is that the active techniques do not require a "fifty minute hour" or structured setting to be used. They may be employed naturally in all the settings into which prayer and deep conversation can be introduced. A certain amount of uninterrupted privacy is necessary for any serious approach to life. If it is available, even for a short time, the pastor may teach psychosynthesis techniques to his people much as he teaches them to pray.

This is true partly because the inner mythic representations of spiritual resources which are appealed to are in some cases identical, in most cases very similar to those of Christianity. The techniques which are used to effect awareness and involvement with these resources are also similar to Christian disciplines (as in the case with Assagioli's spiritual psychosynthesis group using Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and the modern use of the Ignatian Exercises represented in *A Month With the Master*, by Archie Matson).

As the Reverend Owen Brandon points out the psychosynthetic technique of catharsis has a bearing on the Christian practice of confession; its critical analysis of the Self has a bearing on the Christian duty of self-understanding and self-judgment; its methods of training of the will has a bearing on the Christian aim of self-discipline; the use of symbols has a bearing upon Christian worship, prayer, contemplation, sacraments, and spirituality; and its emphasis on the importance of interpersonal relationships has a bearing upon the subject of Christian fellowship.

The exercise in self-identification and dis-identification represents a new approach to Christian worship and prayer. It involves a focus upon the Christ within (one's own essential and inherent capacity for transcendence and spiritual existence) rather than a focus upon the God "up there." As Bonhoeffer pointed out this stance is not new, but rather stems out of the Old Testament awareness of God and represents the milieu in which our Lord lived and moved. I sense there is a movement in this direction among numerous people in the church today. If this approach to identifying with and relating to God becomes institutionalized in the form of liturgy and public worship, the principles and techniques of psychosynthesis become exceedingly important. Whether or not this happens, they provide an invaluable background for understanding and nurturing others in the experience of the "beyond" as it appears, not on the frontiers of human experience, but in the nitty-gritty of every day life.

In short, I believe that psychosynthesis bears significantly upon, not only the task of technical and professional pastoral counseling, but on the entire pastoral task of spiritual nurture in the congregational setting. I myself have used many of these techniques in the visitation of the sick, in the conducting of worship services, and in working with young people. It is my hope that psychosynthesis will at least be helpful in filling a vacuum which has existed since the turn of the century and which has left many Christians with no approach to spiritual reality.

What has been missing since the turn of the century is an

approach to the inner life that could meet the needs of modern men.

Somehow the need of Man to *project* the "I" outward and identify with it (the approach of Christian worship for centuries) has been replaced by a need to *introject* the "I" and identify with it. This is some of the sense of what Bonhoeffer speaks of in terms of religionless Christianity.

The 'beyond' of God is not the beyond of our perceptive faculties. Epistemological theory has nothing to do with the transcendence of God. God is the 'beyond' in the midst of our life. The church stands not where human process give out, on the borders, but in the center of the village. That is the way it is in the Old Testament, and in this sense we still read the New Testament far too little on the basis of the Old. The outward aspect of this religionless Christianity, the form it takes is something to which I am giving much thought, and I shall be writing to you about it again soon.¹⁴

The need to place the transcendent at the heart of human experience instead of its borders, is echoed here.

Another way of identifying with the Creator, perhaps a more intimate and responsible way, has pressed into the arena of human need. (It should be noted that I regard projection and introjection here not as defenses in a negative sense, but as means of discovering identity, and as stepping stones in the evolution of consciousness.) Perhaps what has been missing is a way to pursue this identification. As the old way of projection has failed to meet the need of modern man, prayer groups have withered and died. But no new tools have been available to fill the gap.

¹⁴Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1959), p. 93.

If my conjectures prove to be correct, the church may, in time, pick up the approaches of Psychosynthesis as means by which to achieve spiritual identity and contact more fully the energies of God. My experience is that more often than is thought, people are hungry for inner reality but simply lack a way to make contact.

Whether or not this approach to spiritual identity proves to be a widespread movement, its immediate future will probably be limited to a relatively few "hungry souls" whose existential needs drive them to search for greater fulfillment, and to expend the large amounts of time and energy involved.

The church offers two distinct assets to this situation. First, it has an historically large supply of "hungry souls" as compared with the population in general. Second is the congregational structure which is designed to minister from womb to tomb. This latter is invaluable for supporting the task of a psychosynthetic approach to boundless human growth, which emphasizes the management of this growth by the grower himself.

Just as the person may study the scriptures and pray alone so may he practice many of the disciplines of psychosynthesis alone, the difficulties which arise being handled on a consultative basis. This model lends itself to long term development. The more intense techniques must of course be done with the help of the counselor, such as those related to Guided Affective Imagery techniques. Though these techniques are extremely time consuming for the counselor they are only a part of the total methodology. Much of both personal and

spiritual psychosynthesis techniques can be managed by the person alone, or with others in groups. So, this model for ministry, though time consuming, seems to be possible. "We should remember that we live in a materialistic age when few men can go far on the spiritual path without help."¹⁵

At this time, there is a further limitation as to the degree to which psychosynthesis has been explicitly integrated with Christianity. I believe I have demonstrated that this integration is theoretically possible, in Section I, and pointed to some general directions in Section II. Nevertheless, the specific, practical use of Psychosynthesis techniques in worship and ministry is a large task yet to be done.

Again, the present opportunity to transcend this impasse is a good one. Old worship and devotional forms are being changed by liturgical revision, jettisoned by dissatisfaction, and ignored by apathetic discouragement. Bonhoeffer's notion of religionless Christianity is widely known, (though little understood). There is an interest in the inner life via the counter-culture and the inclusion of Eastern Spiritual disciplines.

Perhaps a shift from the transcendent "out there," to the transcendent "in here" will soon be possible. If this is so, a very careful and specific, and arduous translation of, for example, the identification exercise may be valuable, in order to facilitate contact

¹⁵ J. G. Bennett, *Christian Mysticism and Subud* (New York: Pharma, 1961), p. 58.

with Christian thought forms.

Psychosynthesis is not easy, nor quick, nor any sort of short-cut to wholeness. It has limitations, some of which I have pointed out. Nevertheless it holds the promise of evoking in those involved, new experiences, motivations and potentialities.

Summary

The ideas and methods of psychosynthesis were developed over the past 50 years by Dr. Roberto Assagioli of Florence, Italy. He holds to a pluri-dimensional conception of the human personality which partakes of many of the concepts of dynamic psychology. He further holds to a personal "self" or ego which he describes as "a center of pure consciousness" to be differentiated from all contents of consciousness, and a higher Self which stands beyond the personal self and which insures the continuity of the personal self by virtue of its own permanency. While experience of the personal self is accompanied quite often by loneliness, the hallmark of the experience of the higher self is a sense of communion. Assagioli's view of the self differs in significant ways from that of Jung, and almost all expressions of contemporary psychologists. It is characterized by ineffableness and pure subjectivity.

Closely related to his concept of self, is Assagioli's notion of the will which is the essential function of the self. He emphasizes a skillful and insightful use of the will, not opposing drives and impulses blindly but connecting all of the functions of the psyche

with the will in a wise way.

Although peripheral to his ideas of the self and the will, the *super-conscious* is a very important concept in psychosynthesis. The contents of the super-conscious corresponds to the creative archetypes of Jungian psychology. It includes images which evoke aesthetic, ethical, and religious experiences, and techniques for evoking these experiences are included in psychosynthesis. Among these are the waking daydreams of De Soille and the guided affective imagery techniques of Hanscarl Leuner. The phenomenon of genius is seen as being related to a heightened participation in the contents of the super-conscious, and the spiritual strivings of the super-conscious are seen as essential aspects of the human personality rather than as being derived from lower functions as is the case of psychoanalytic thought.

In order to erect a conceptual bridge between Christianity and psychosynthesis, the phenomenon of myth and myth-making must be discussed. While primitive man lived immersed in a world of myth, axial man has destroyed the mythic structure of existence through the process of rational reflection. In spite of this fact, the unconscious, the source of myth, continues to be active and contemporary man is experiencing the re-emergence of myth. The universal myths of darkness and light as emblematic of unconsciousness and consciousness are forwarded as offering a key to understanding the basic values of various mythologies. The Biblical frame of reference holds that light is both original and ultimate. Rather than following the view of a fall upward into consciousness the view of Martin Buber is forwarded

that a man's origins are in consciousness and that the fall is into a specific consciousness of opposites that poses man with the concept of dread. Darkness is in an accidental and secondary relationship to light. This is held to be a decisive factor in the Biblical representation of the nature of the universe and of man himself, and distinguishes the Biblical myth from many other world views.

It is now important to add to the discussion of mythic imagery an examination of the various stances of the psyche towards its inner mythology. The discussion begins with John Cobb's description of man's existence in terms of the body, the emotions, the reason, the will, and the spirit. Men throughout the ages have identified with all of these various categories. Spirit is defined as man's identification of his center with his capacity to transcend the other dimensions and identify with them at will. His central identification is with his capacity to choose. The concept of self (Assagioli), person (Cobb) and "personal I" (Eliade) are related and connected with one another. These qualities of the "I," of responsibility, consciousness and reflectiveness are connected to the image of light and its symbolic correlates. To identify the "I" with light in the consciousness of believers is to ring the earth with light, to give coherence to the depths of man, to question implicitly the power of womb and tomb, and to enable man to face "the demon crouching at the door." With psychosynthesis, as with Christianity, the ultimate depth of humanity is imagined to be conscious, willing, and affirmative of the organism as a whole. The myths and structures of existence of other psychologies

and theologies are examined and compared. This analysis places psychosynthesis in the category of a growth oriented psychology which offers resources to those ministering to people of radical ability and disability, offers hope for the resolution of social conflict and family problems and suggests new approaches to in-depth education and worship.

In psychosynthesis the concepts of the self, the imagination, and the will bring the human organism to a stance of openness and self-transcendence toward inner depths and outer reality. They lead psychosynthesis to a methodology of the skillful utilization of active techniques, whereby a sense of one's own being and transcendence is enhanced.

In this process the quality of immediacy is encouraged, and the value of creative anxiety is acknowledged. A sense of inner directedness is fostered and the reciprocal effect of the inner world upon the outer world and vice versa, is acknowledged.

Psychosynthesis not only finds itself in the forefront of the current movement of transpersonal psychology but it also offers pastoral counseling a therapy of worship. This stems from the fact that the practice of the majority of psychosynthesis techniques leads to an awareness of one's own being which transcends any concrete manifestation of that being in existence. This essential truth, that there is more than the immediacy of our circumstances at every point along the way, lies at the heart of Christian worship as well as psychosynthesis. Psychosynthesis provides the pastoral counselor with a disci-

pline in harmony with his own mythic structures and fits into the congregational structure well.

In the conducting of a personal psychosynthesis, the beginning entails an assessment of the conscious aspects of the personality. This logic stems from the conviction that if a man wants to live consciously, he needs more than a dim passive awareness of his own ego. The patient writes a biography of his own life, he is asked to keep a diary or psychological workbook, identifies his own personality traits and sub-personalities, complexes, and attitudes. In this way a sense of one's own center, the observing "I" has begun to be strengthened already.

Psychosynthesis also uses a wide variety of psychoanalytic techniques in the exploration of the unconscious. A number of projective tests, may be used with the therapist mindful of the many dangers inherent in exploring the unconscious. Fractional analysis, in which analysis proceeds in a series of installments interspersed with active synthetic techniques, is utilized to lessen pathological reactions to the exploration of the unconscious.

Another major effort in personal psychosynthesis is to control the various elements of the personality. Catharsis, verbal expression, writing, muscular discharge, are all used to direct and discharge the energy of the psyche. Central to all of psychosynthesis is the exercise of identification with consciousness and dis-identification with the contents of consciousness. A sensitive and insightful program for the training of the will is also an essential part of psychosynthesis,

as is the use of many techniques for the training of the imagination. The evocation of sounds and music is likewise related to the strengthening of the "I" consciousness.

Eventually a dawning awareness of one's true self takes place, then the formation or reconstruction of the personality around the new center is planned. This involves a working together of the therapist and the patient in the development of appropriate ideal models. These are to be sharply distinguished from the "idealized" self images in the language of Karen Horney, and are to be practical, attainable, and harmonious with the larger purposes of the personality. These ideal models serve the function of providing the motive drive and appropriate direction for the development of the person.

In addition to the matters dealt with in personal psychosynthesis there is the occasional powerful direct experience of the infusion of meaning from beyond, leaving one with the certainty that all of life is profoundly important and profoundly meaningful. These numinous experiences have the effect of permeating the most pedestrian of life happenings with their beauty. These experiences may be encouraged and evoked through the utilization of symbols.

The point of intersection between symbol utilization and Christian prayer is that of selective attention upon the symbols which are of a creative nature and foster openness to God and his universe. The cross, the burning bush, focusing upon awareness of one's own being, all suggest and cast us in the direction of the constant willing and purposiveness of the higher Self. The guided daydream of DeSoille

connects the experience of ascending with light, on the one hand, and descending with darkness on the other hand. Light may also be used to generate a process of gradual contact and identification with an inner light of understanding and insight. Contact with the spiritual self, the inner core, the real being of the person, has the transforming power which often results in a sense of the oneness of the whole family of man. Such techniques are related to Christian mystical disciplines such as "mental prayer," the "Jesus prayer" of Russian orthodoxy, and the Ignatian exercises of the Roman Catholic Church.

Perhaps one of the greatest underlying contributions of psychosynthesis is that it provides the pastoral counselor with an understanding of psychological disturbances which embraces the spiritual aspect of man's being. Many psychological disturbances have a spiritual origin, and this is becoming increasingly so as many people strive toward a fuller life. Too often the church fails to recognize this and to minister effectively. The techniques of both personal and spiritual psychosynthesis bear upon this problem creatively.

Recently work has been done in developing the use of psychosynthesis techniques for groups. Such groups promote the reflectiveness and sense of community appearing in the thought of Teilhard de Chardin.

Psychosynthesis offers constructs related to the self, imagination and the will which are helpful to pastoral counseling. In addition to a host of active techniques which may be used by both pastors and professional counselors, the meditative approaches of

psychosynthesis are applicable to the pastoral ministry through use in worship services, hospital ministry, home calls, youth groups, and growth groups. Growth groups could possibly be organized around use of the identification exercise, participation in guided imagery, and reflection upon the shared experiences.

The limitations of psychosynthesis include the incompleteness of the system at this stage of its development. Theologically, the chief weakness is an undefined view of human sin, and a tendency to appear somewhat deterministic in its optimism. Psychologically, psychosynthesis lacks a clear psychology of human interaction, and a lack of statistical data to support its theories and techniques. Psychosynthesis has a tendency to appeal to people with an inherently intuitive approach to life more strongly than it does to other psychological types. It is also time consuming, and this may preclude its use by some people.

Nevertheless psychosynthesis provides a new approach for identifying with the Creator, and offers Christians an avenue of personal growth in harmony with their traditions.

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